

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY
C. ARTHUR PEARSON

(OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 425.

FOR WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 20TH, 1897.

[ONE PENNY.]

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S.S. S.S.

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£100

COUPON.

February 20, 1897.

No. 9.

S.S. S.S.

S.S. S.S.

PEARSON'S

£100

COUPON.

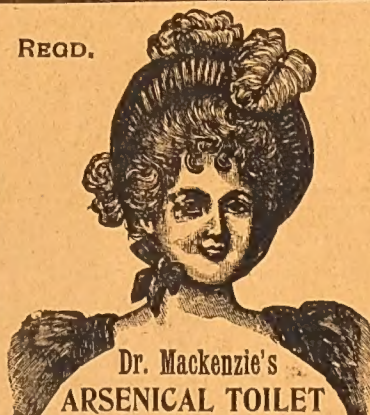
No. 9.

Feb. 20, 1897.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 425.]

[ONE PENNY.]

For the Week ending February 20th, 1897.

MR. VANDERNEST'S VALENTINES.



"I NEVER, never saw anyone quite like you, Clare. So persistent, so insistent. Always money, money, money! I should think you thought I was made of money!"

Perhaps Clare had seen too little of her father to let her think him made of anything else.

"Well, aren't you, papa?" she said roguishly, looking up into his sour face, and hugging herself, while the wind whistled round her bare head.

"Really, Clare is the only one who can do anything with her father," said Mrs. Vandernest, looking down cautiously from the drawing-room window, left open by the maid, to the street where Mr. Vandernest had been arrested on the way to the carriage by Clare's fluting voice, hiding herself, meanwhile, behind the curtain which blew about her, threatening to disclose her, do what she would, and not daring to drop the sash lest her husband should glance up and see her.

"Take care, Emma," said her sister, who chanced to be spending the morning with her. "If he sees you, it's all up with Clare's hopes. What a gale it must be out at sea; a regular dry storm! Here, let me hold down the curtain. There! He's getting to be a regular curmudgeon. Who would ever have dreamt it of Sydney?"

"It's too bad," sighed the wife. "It's really too bad. But it's wrong for me to let you talk so, Helena. He is my husband and—"

"Nonsense! I should have to be blind and deaf, as well as dumb, and a senseless woman besides, not to appreciate Sydney for all he's worth—"

"He's worth more than a hundred thousand. He never used to be so," whimpered Mrs. Vandernest, whether in reference to the money or the curmudgeon.

"Clare's indifference doesn't trouble him; Gerald's despair—and Ruth is such a lovely creature! If all the Guinares of the sea looked as she does in that last picture of Gerald's, we should have very few young men above water."

"But really. Look, look quick!—I do believe—"

"He certainly is—hush!" exclaimed Helena in a whisper. "If Clare hasn't carried the day! He's putting his hand into his pocket! He's taken out a note! Oh, be careful, don't let him see us—it's a crucial moment."

It was indeed a crucial moment. "I don't approve of a young girl having so much money," Mr. Vandernest was saying petulantly.

All rights reserved.

"What was it you said you wanted it for?" suspiciously and still holding the note by one end between thumb and finger.

"I didn't say, papa," she cried gleefully.

"Well you had better if you want it."

"It's—it's rather a secret," she said hesitatingly, the colour coming and going like a flame. "You know that lady—I shall catch my death of cold out here!"

"Then run in at once. What lady?" as she didn't run in.

"Why, the pale one with the brown eyes and the white hair, with the lovely lame girl—that exquisite creature whose lameness is only a beauty, she uses her crutches in the way a swan does his feet in the water—that sits behind the big pillar in church—"

"You want to spend my money on those beggars!" he roared. "You want to give away what it has cost me years of labour and struggle to get together! Those people I've forbidden Gerald to go near again! You—"

And just at that instant a great puff of wind came sailing and swirling about them, and snatched the bit of paper from his thumb and finger, and went careering up and away with it, up, up, up, over the bare tree-tops, over the houses and into the clouds themselves.

Mr. Vandernest looked after it one long moment. As if he could not believe the evidence of his senses, he glanced at his hands, at the steps, made a motion towards his daughter as if he would like to shake her, and then dashed down to his carriage like one of the swine into whom the evil spirits betook themselves. But Clare had already fled the place, and she darted upstairs and into the front drawing-room, where Aunt Helena slammed down the window.

"Oh! oh! oh!" she sobbed, as much with excitement and apprehension as with disappointment. "When I all but had it! And what, what do you suppose he will do and say when he comes back?"

"He—he can't kill you," said her mother.

"He can shut me up in my room—"

"He never did."

"He can forbid me to go out, and refuse me a new bonnet for a year, and bring me to shame by disputing the dressmaker's bill—"

"No," said her Aunt Helena, smoothing the tangles of yellow curls where the wind had played havoc, "he will do nothing of the sort. He'll just fret about the waste of butter, and the surplus of the pudding-sauce, and threaten to put Gerald to work as a day-labourer on a farm."

"It's a dreadful life, oh, it's a dreadful life!" sighed her mother.

And although anyone might have seen that Mr. Vandernest's family was in what is politely called an insurrectionary state, no one would have supposed that he really loved them with all the heart he had, be the same much or little, and that they lived in a house little short of a palace, provided by his money, even if every separate article in it had been wrung out of him as if at the cost of his life's blood.

"Well," said Clare, ruffling all her curls again, "that's the end of Ruth's worsted. If she ever has her foot straightened, it will be by no means of ours. And I did so want to help her, and I made up the work and offered her the price—I must take it, anyhow, mamma, and I must pay her; I shall sell my pearl earrings. Just think what papa might do for people if he only would! There's the postman. Oh, yes, James has his hands full! Valentines! Oh, what a deadly waste of money!"

It was odd that just at that moment Mrs. Paul, the

pale woman with brown eyes and the white hair who sat behind the pillar in the church, should be making the same remark about Mr. Vandernest. "Just think what he might do with his money, if he only would!"

"Well, as his daughter Clare would say, he only won't," Ruth answered her. "And that isn't the worst of it!"

"No," said her mother. "He only will—when it comes to this question of demanding his own. And it is his own, I suppose, but your father always told me he had rendered Mr. Vandernest good and sufficient service for the money represented in that note; and the moment we were left defenceless that note is presented, and we have nothing to do but to pay it, or lose the house over our heads. I am thankful there is only £20 more to pay on it."

"I should be more thankful," said Ruth, "if I knew where the £20 was coming from. You see, stitch as I can on this embroidery of Clare's, I can't finish it yet."

"If it were done and paid for," said the mother, "I had meant that money to go for the straightening of your foot."

"Not with that debt hanging over us. I forget my foot isn't straight—Gerald never remembers it. I only submitted to taking the fancy price she promised in order to pay the debt to her father, and I don't see what we can do."

For all the look of trouble on her face, she was as beautiful as King Cophetua's beggar maid, as she sat there with the sprays and wreaths growing under her needle like frost on the pane, the dark hair accentuating the perfect pallor of the face, whose red lips were its only colour, the features perfect as an antique, the great black-lashed, sea-grey eyes shining like aquamarine jewels. The mother thought if Mr. Vandernest once saw her, once heard the music of the brook-like voice, he might feel a pride and pleasure in his son's choice. She felt almost angry the next moment to think that Gerald was her daughter's choice.

"I am going out," she said presently. "I shall go to his office and ask him to take less this time. He can but turn us out, and he will do that way, without scruple. What a storm there is blowing up! But I suppose you will know nothing about it. Gerald will come while I'm gone, and when he comes, it's all sunshine!"

"I wish there were a little sunshine now," said Ruth. "It's so dark for such fine work. I wish that shutter would swing back. Hold the mull, mother, please, while I open the window and fasten back this blind." But the wind blew in as she opened the sash, and in spite of the mother's hand, mull and patterns and thread went whirling every way at once, and suddenly, while Mrs. Paul was hurrying to gather them out of the wind's way, the girl's voice cried: "Oh mother, mother, look; but do look!" And as if a bird had flown into her bosom she had clasped her hands across something nestling there, a great white leaf, a fresh, crisp £20 note.

"If this isn't a valentine sent from Heaven, there never was one!" cried she. "And what a valentine! A £20 note! I never saw such a note before, and I never had a valentine," she cried, letting the window fall. "Oh, I will never doubt Providence again! A £20 note!" And the girl's joy transformed her into a sort of radiance.

Mrs. Paul took the note and examined it, even to the daub of red ink where someone had started to scribble initials on the back and then smeared them out. "Yes," she said calmly, "some one has lost it—poor soul. It was not a kind Providence to that person. We must advertise it, I suppose. It isn't ours."

Ruth looked at her a moment, first in amazement and then in horror, hiding her face in her hands. "Oh!" she cried, "how wicked I am! How good you are! I am no better than—than—any bad person! I would have kept it, but it wasn't ours!" And when she went back to her needle she could hardly see it for the tears that kept coming.

Mrs. Paul folded the note away in her purse, wrote out a brief advertisement, which she put beside it, and presently stood before Mr. Vandernest's desk, briefly stating her errand.

"It's very extraordinary, very extraordinary, indeed," he said fussy. "Women never seem to have any idea of business. A most improper request of a business man. Business is business. And to ask a man to receive partial payment when the whole is due——"

"It is all I have," said Mrs. Paul, with a gesture of something like despair. And then she remembered herself and opened her purse and took out the £5, and laid the little pile before him. "In three months," she said, "I hope to be able to pay the remainder. But to-day it's all I have."

"Madam!" said Mr. Vandernest, peering over his desk suddenly, "why do you make such a statement as that, when I saw plainly, very plainly, a bank-note in your purse? Not that I want it, but that I see it! A five—a ten——"

Mrs. Paul took it out instantly and opened it before him. "It is a £20 note," she said, "but it is not mine. It blew into my window less than an hour ago."

"It is mine," he said quickly, his dark face flushing purple. "It blew out of my hands less than an hour ago as I stood talking at my door with my daughter. I know it by the mark and smear of red ink—it caught my eye then—there it is——"

"If as you say, sir," said Mrs. Paul quietly, "there can be no doubt about it. The note is yours." She tossed the advertisement into the waste-paper basket and laid the note on the desk. "I am glad to be able to restore it to you," she said, and waited a moment for his decision of her own affair.

He opened a drawer, dropped the note in and closed it, looked out of the window a moment, and then up at the ceiling, and then examined his finger nails. "Well, no, Mrs. Paul," said he, "I don't feel called upon to administer charity in this case. I have already been more than lenient. I will give you what I may call the customary three days' grace, and then if you are not able to pay me the rest of the money, I shall feel obliged to put an attachment on your property." He would like to repel her so that she wouldn't let her daughter marry Gerald. But no danger of that, he thought.

"Death is a great leveller, I have heard it said, Mr. Vandernest," said Mrs. Paul, after a moment's silence, "and my husband's death has shown me the truth of the saying. If I had come into your office during his lifetime you would have sprung to offer me a chair; you would have placed your purse at my disposal. Now, you have not even asked me to be seated, and you make yourself the oppressor of the widow and the fatherless in my person and my child's. Good-morning."

And feeling glad at any rate that she had been able to give him that piece of her mind, she left the place, and left him full of astonished silence; for Mr. Vandernest was not a man of violent language, and if he had been, he was quite too much amazed to use it. He, the courtly Mr. Vandernest, accused of incivility. He, a church member, called to his face the oppressor of the fatherless. He felt as if he were turning to stone.

He sat so for perhaps half-an-hour, not consciously thinking of anything at all.

Then he rose and put on his great coat. Let the wind blow. He must pay a visit to his solicitor.

He glanced over one or two papers. There were others he must have, but they were with certain of his securities in the safe which was built into the library wall at home. The carriage had gone back; but he could call a cab and go for them.

So Mr. Vandernest drove home, and let himself in and mounted the velvet-covered stairs to the library where were the papers he sought. As he noiselessly opened the safe, a hum of voices on the other side of the curtain caught his ear, and mention of himself arrested him.

"I shouldn't feel so," Clare was saying, "if papa was like other men."

He! Mr. Vandernest! Not like other men!

"But just look at the contemptible parsimony with which we are treated."

Contemptible parsimony! Oh, Miss Clare, you have sealed your fate! Mr. Vandernest looked about him at the old Indian rug on the floor from the palace of a Ramapoetra prince, for which he had paid £600; at the Jules Breton on the wall, the Diaz, the Merle, the Corot full of dreaming; at the Vibert on the easel with its every dainty detail and its scorching moral; at the velvet divans, the bronze Perseus, the silver lamps, the sweeping purple velvet curtain, the books, marvels of tooling, the screen, the vases, the crystal jar of red roses—these had cost nothing less than 5s. apiece—he knew—had he not paid for them? And parsimony! He, who liked to have everything rich and fine about him! His heart stood still a second.

"Yes," his wife was saying, "he could trust me with the right use of his children all their lives, but not of his money. The house is a palace, but I feel like a caged bird in it. I can't spend a penny without accounting for it. I can't have a penny without asking for it like a beggar and telling what I want to do with it, and then it's like drawing teeth to get it. It's been so for years. I might have an immortal soul in my charge, but not a cheque-book."

"Somebody had to have the immortal souls in charge," said Clare, "and I'm sure papa doesn't even know if we were made with souls or without them. He has never spent enough time with us to find out. He doesn't know that Gerald has genius enough to make his name known when that of every mere millionaire is forgotten. He doesn't even know he has a painting-room at the top of the house. I'm sure if he were to open a studio he would have orders enough in a year to let him marry Ruth Paul, the dear beauty, instead of breaking their two hearts as they are doing now! I think the best thing we can do is to go off by ourselves, mamma. You've a little money, and that would pay our room-rent, and I could get a school, and run the house, and then nothing could be expected of us, and at all events we should have some peace from papa——"

"Clare!" said her mother, drawing a long breath of astonishment.

"And I'm sure that as for him he'd be a great deal happier rid of us, and never seeing us again——"

"Oh, you don't think so!" cried the mother, horrified and agast.

"Yes, I do. And so would we, once we were used to it. At any rate, we'd be free. Why, mamma, what in the world are you crying for? I do believe—why, mamma, it isn't possible you love papa?"

"Yes, it is!" cried his wife, in a volcanic outburst.

"Yes, I do," she sobbed. "I've loved him all my life—and I can't leave off now—because he isn't—he isn't—all I wish he was. I love him all the more because he needs love all the more! He—he—has a great deal of right on—on his side—from—his point of view, too. I'm very inefficient, or I should never have allowed you to go on so. Your father, your dear father—he was handsome, he was kind, he was tender once—I don't care if he is occupied with making money now, I can wait, I am waiting, I have been! By-and-bye he will come back to me."

Mr. Vandernest's face grew very white as he listened. It seemed to him all at once that the speaker was a young wild rose of a girl, in a briary, blossomy land of summer evening; and he for the first time pressing his lips to hers, drawing her soul into his own, with his arms about her there under the swinging branches, the purple heavens, the hazy stars, his heart full of high purpose, his will of endeavour. He sank for a moment into the nearest chair. "He was really undergoing a good deal to-day," he said to himself; he felt faint.

A sort of mild Day of Judgment, this, on which he had fallen, not St. Valentine's day after all, and he laughed grimly and silently. Here was his wife waiting for the happiness she had never had since the first year of their married life; and his children feeling this way.

Clare, the little ringleted, rosy creature who—who—well, if he lost her, life wouldn't be worth a toss up; and Gerald—his boy—no time to win them back, to take the pleasure which he had always felt was waiting ahead, ready when he was ready! Why, he was past fifty now—when was he going to enjoy it?

The voices rippled and ejaculated and wept on, but he heard no more. He sat there, again lost in an abyss of thought, and only roused himself and went to his safe and his table when the chimes struck out the half-hour. One would not have needed to be eavesdropping to have heard a singular sound shortly after that, a sound like a child with an ear for a tune trying to blow a piccolo.

"Hush!" exclaimed Clare. "Hush! What's that? I declare, if that isn't papa whistling! Oh, what do you suppose he's at home for at this time of day? And whistling! it frightens me! Is he going to make a fuss about that bill blowing away?"

The curtain parted at the word, and Mr. Vandernest stood there, hat in hand and overcoat on arm, a smile on his lips, and a parcel of papers in his fingers.

"Well, Emma," said he, looking at his trembling wife, "I suppose you're wondering what I'm at home for at this hour? What if I had said the firm had failed, and that I am a ruined man, and we have to begin all over again?"

"Oh, Sydney!" she cried, running forward with clasped hands, "I should be so glad!"

"The deuce you would! Well," he returned, laughing,

"I'm sorry you can't be made glad—I mean I'm glad—that is, oh, well, it would be a lie if I said so. But the fact is, it's St. Valentine's day, you know, and I thought I'd do a little of the old saint's work for him to-day. Don't you remember when we used to make much of the day, thirty years ago or so?"

"Oh, Sydney," with a pretty girlish motion. "I——"

"Well, in the first place, here's a valentine for you, my love, not so pretty as the old valentines used to be when you lifted the lace paper and saw your own pretty face in the little mirror there. But more useful," said Mr. Vandernest, "more useful," and he handed her a big envelope. "There are bonds and certificates of stock, coupons attached, which will give you an independent income to spend just as you please, and give account to no one. And if there's more than you want to spend all at once, put it in a bank. And there's a cheque-book. And that's your valentine. Clare! Here! What are you slipping away for? Didn't you say that note this morning would make the foot straight for that girl?"

Clare only stared at him, open-eyed. "Well," said he, "that note blew away. But this cheque is just as good. It's for several times more. And you can tell her to get her wedding clothes ready with the rest of it. And I'll send Gerald along to her after a little talk. Where is he? Top of the house? In his painting-room? I've about decided that if he wants to go to Paris and study, he'd better; and I'd rather he took a wife along with him than go without. It's no use having all our money and letting people fret their heart out for what money I'll do. Well, that's her valentine. And—and—wait a minute, Clare, here's another envelope; that's for the old lady, the mother, Mrs. Paul. It's a cancelled note. You give it her with my regards; that's her valentine. And I protest, Clare: there isn't any valentine for you, unless."—and he held his arms wide, and Clare sprang into them.

"Oh, you're my valentine, papa," she said, "when you're like this! I don't mean giving but living, and being one of us, and making us love you."

"And now, my dear," said Mr. Vandernest, holding Clare in one arm and reaching the other for his wife, "no matter about the gale. 'It's an ill wind that blows nobody good.' Do you remember going to see a *Midsummer Night's Dream*, thirty years ago to-day with me? Well it's on again now, and if there's anything in the house for lunch, we'll have a bite and be off to it, you and I. We may as well have a season of theatre going and concerts together while we can. I dare say I'm as big an ass as Bottom was, to be as much in love with you now as I was almost a generation ago. No, that isn't what I mean, of course. But it seems to me to-day as if I'd been an ass for a good while. Well, we'll begin again; and if you'll seal the compact with a kiss; well, that shall be my valentine!"

R. BARRD.





PROLOGUE

THE afternoon sun of an autumn day was among the leaves of Chisholme Park, a small estate in Dorsetshire.

It was setting for the last time upon the owner of the compact estate, who lay dying in the rather diminutive square grey house standing on a lawn in the middle of the park. The Honourable Ernest Wentworth, the younger son of a great family, lying abed, could see the red beams making bars on the carpet, and, in his loneliness, reflected on the failure of his life—his short life of thirty-six years—till tears rolled from his eyes.

He would have been still sadder if he could have risen from his bed, walked down an avenue of limes, and seen two persons, one of them his wife, sitting on a bench within a bower.

Ernest Wentworth, a year before, had made a *més-alliance* in Paris with one of the *artistes* at the *Théâtre des Variétés*. His brother, Lord Hilton, had not been hasty in discarding his own flesh and blood. In a curt letter to Ernest he had said that he was willing to receive the couple at Hillcrest Lodge; but he took care that the house should be empty of visitors on their arrival. The new-wedded pair were not slow to accept the invitation; for they almost entirely depended for supplies upon the bounty of the elder brother, and felt that they must not slight his will. But an hour of Julie's company was enough for Lord Hilton; he decided that she was "impossible"; that his brother had, in truth as well as in appearance, disgraced his name. He would have no more to do with him.

Chisholme Park, however, remained to Ernest in his own right.

And now, after a year, he lay dying of consumption; and Julie, for whom he had braved obloquy and loss, sat in the bower; and her hand lay in the hand of a stranger.

In the woman's eyes was a strange look—a look almost like mesmeric subordination.

And yet she had only met the man some four months before. It was in the middle of the whirl and gaiety of a county hunt-ball. No such function to which she could gain admission did her light, pleasure-loving nature ever permit her to miss; and in everything upon which she set her wayward heart the Hon. Ernest Wentworth was bound, for the sake of peace, to indulge her. At this ball she had happened to meet Dr. Lemaitre, and at the first look into his eyes Julie knew that she had met her fate and her master.

"Money!" she said now, with a little playful scorn; "you are always wanting money."

"Money and you," he said, drumming a tune with his fingers on her hand.

"I have got myself to give away," she said, and rubbed her face against his shoulder, "but where am I to get money from?"

Lemaitre took up her hand, and set to examining her nails. He was a very large, tall man, with dough-like, coarse skin, heavy moustache, and a great tuft of imperial falling over his chin. The top of his high and massive forehead was somewhat bald, though he was quite young.

"Where am I to get it from?" he said, mimicking her. "Where I got it from before, to be sure! Rather neat nails, now I come to think of it; but this little finger is a little bit crooked in the top joint."

She snatched her hand free and pouted.

"But, Julie," he went on, "this money business; it is serious, you know. I am *fearfully* pumped, and I only want fifty pounds, but it must be to-night."

"Not to-night," she said, with firm-set lips.

"May I ask why?"

"No—not to-night."

"But I say to-night, Julie."

He was frowning a little behind her with a most intense kind of effort at the back of her head. Her dark face wore a flush of crimson.

"If it comes to that, you have no right to command me—to order me about, Armand," she said half-angrily, half-nervously. "I am nothing to you."

"But you profess to love me, Julie."

"Oh, yes; that I don't deny."

"Then why not to-night?"

"Armand, be reasonable. My husband lies dying. Is it fair to steal from him just at this moment?"

"But you don't seem to realise that I *want* the amount."

"Oh, I know that you *want* it," she said; "but must you have everything you want just at the moment? Do, I beg you, wait two days—three—till he—"

"My child, you are talking nonsense."

All this time Lemaitre had been frowning, frowning, unseen by her, at the back of her head, suggesting, implanting obedience into her brain. A vague, dreamy look gradually overspread the eyes of Julie.

She heaved a soft sigh.

"Oh! I feel so faint, Armand. And I do love you."

"Good girl! go now, then."

Slowly she rose; and slowly, steadily, she walked away

from him over the greensward without a word. It was not difficult to see from her carriage that she was unusually perturbed.

Dr. Lemaitre, looking after her, smiled to himself, and said:

"Poor, Julie! I believe I am genuinely fond of the child."

He was some few years older than she, she being hardly nineteen; but her richly-flushed, black-eyed face had the look of a much more mature age. As she passed over the threshold with her fine, free step, a servant said to her:

"I think the master has been calling for you, mum."

Julie did not reply. She went toward the dying chamber, but not into it. Instead, she turned off, and entered a small room separated from the other by a door.

Her step was soft, all her actions were stealthy, as she took a bunch of keys from a writing-desk, and fitted one into the door of a bureau.

At that moment she heard a faint voice call:

"Julie, is that you?"

She did not reply. She plunged her hand far into the drawer, and seemed to grope with her fingers, half-kneeling. At last she drew out a small bundle of notes. She counted some, which she held in her right hand, while she replaced the others with the left. She was just rising to lock the bureau, when she heard a sound behind her.

The door had opened, and there stood Ernest Wentworth, tall, and white-robed, pointing silently at her with the forefinger of his outstretched arm.

*There stood Ernest Wentworth
... pointing silently at her.*

From his white and working lips no sound came. Suddenly he swayed forward, then backward. His arm dropped, he tottered, righted himself again; and fell sideways, dead.

Julie rushed from the room, her face white and haggard. She did not stop. Straight across the lawn, down the pathway of the park she fled, the notes in her hand.

Lemaitre came slowly from the bower to meet her.

"Why, what is the matter—" he began.

"Here—go—go," she panted. "He is—go—"

She hurriedly handed him the money, and ran back towards the house.

The manner of her husband's death, and the circumstances of the moment under which it occurred, had given her a sharp shock of affright.

There is in us all a deep instinct that wrong must be punished. In the evil-doer's sky is a cloud.

Julie was very frightened. And her condition was one in which small events have big effects. That night she bore a daughter, considerably before the expected time.

Ernest Wentworth had left her practically without an income. He was an improvident, happy-go-lucky fellow, who had always lived from hand to mouth. Julie had

fears that she would have to go back to the stage, even if she married Lemaitre; and under the circumstances she had strong objections to the inconvenient new arrival. In writing to Lemaitre, who had returned to Paris, she studiously refrained from mentioning the coming of the little girl, fearing that he too might show disapproval at her advent. When, after three months, her lover summoned her to France with a view to their marriage, she was at her wit's end what to do with little Edith. The one thing she was resolved not to do was to present the child to her new lord. She dreaded like death his least frown.

But Providence cut the knot for her. Lady Hilton, hearing of her poverty, induced the Earl to adopt the little one, and at the critical moment the proposal came to Julie to give up the child to them on the strict condition that her connection with it should thenceforth cease.

She jumped eagerly at the offer, and, on the same day that she handed the child to Lord Hilton's messenger in London, left for Paris.

CHAPTER I. THE MURDER IN THE TRAIN.

A LITTLE more than nineteen years after the death of Ernest Wentworth Edith came home finally to Hillcrest Lodge from Paris, where Lord Hilton, who was a Roman Catholic, had placed her in the Convent of St. Julienne to be educated. Lord Hilton had long been dead—so long that it was Lady Hilton only whom Edith knew as her guardian.

She reached Hillcrest Lodge about three weeks before Christmas. Lady Hilton put her two hands on the girl's shoulders, and held her away from her,

looking into her face for some little time before she spoke.

"Why, child," she said at last, "how much lovelier do you mean to grow? It will be positively dangerous to have a party of men in the house with you."

Edith smirked.

"I suppose the Convent of St. Julienne is hardly a likely place for love affairs," continued Lady Hilton, "or I should ask if you haven't had an offer yet."

"Auntie!" the young cheek went rubbing against the old one, "why, I abominate men—all of us in the convent—and despise them. You should hear Cécile—oh, you will like Cécile, Auntie, when she comes! Cécile says—"

"But who is it you are like?" said Lady Hilton, holding her off again. "Not your—your—mother, I think. I saw her once, you know. And not your father either. That portrait there is your father at twenty-five. You have his nose, you know—that narrow nose with wide nostrils panting like a thoroughbred's; but still, you are not like him a bit."

"I had an idea that I was like—like—mamma," said Edith.

"No—oh, no—don't think that. You are not nearly so dark, for one thing, and your mother had a much bolder,



—ATTEMPT FEB.

more precocious aspect, with features beautiful indeed, but not nearly so refined. But come—tea!”

That was three weeks before Christmas. There was to be a great party at the Lodge that season; and presently the arrivals began to drop in.

Hillcrest Lodge is a vast demesne in a beautifully-wooded valley. Its name of Hillcrest was in no way due to its position on a hill, but to the name of a collateral branch of the Wentworths and Hiltons. The mansion itself is very large, built in the style of a French chateau, the lawn being cut into a long series of terraces.

Hillcrest is about five miles north of Seaborough. The express from King's Cross stops at York, then comes a small station further north, then Seaborough. From Seaborough to Hillcrest is a fairly level carriage drive.

At five o'clock on Christmas Eve the train arrived at York station, containing some dozen of Lady Hilton's guests. Captain Arthur Musgrave, turning to a lady at his side in the carriage, said:

“You must be frozen. What shall I get you in the way of refreshment?”

“I? Frozen!” she replied with a strong French accent. “At least, my teeth are not chattering as yours are! Men are self-conceited, eh? Three times since we passed—what you call it?—Grantham, you have shivered down the body, so; and once, three minutes and a half after we left Doncaster, you have tried to put a point to your moustache and could not.”

“Dreadfully observant you are!” said Captain Arthur.

“Ah, I am a woman. A woman must keep her eyes open in the world. I think nothing of her if she can't.”

“But as to refreshments?”

“Stay where you are, poor man. You can't move for the cold in you. I will—”

She had the carriage-door open before he could stir to help her, and was gone, running like a doe towards the bar in a moment.

This was Cécile, Edith's second self.

She was a small, slim creature, without hips or bust, all movement and sauciness and vivacity. She was fair-haired. One of her eyelids drooped a little over the left eye, the only fault in a very pretty face. Yet even the fault was pretty, giving her a piquant, artful charm when she perked her face sideways, as was her manner in speaking.

Captain Arthur languidly got out, stretching his stiff limbs, to follow her. But Cécile was soon returning loaded, followed by a waiter also having both hands full.

“This is for you, sir,” with a courtesy; “and the wine for you, Professor Queech, and the brandy for you, Mr. Jack, and the biscuits for—everybody.”

Mr. Jack, which was short for Mr. Jack Heathcote, as he took his brandy, tried at the same time to touch by accident her little finger with his forefinger, but missed his aim; while Professor Queech, a little old man with a bald head, said, looking at his wine:

“A most extraordinary thing, now—the colour of this wine reminds me of it—yes, perhaps none of you ever considered the relation between colours and musical sounds.”

“I have, dear Professor!” cried Cécile.

“Ah? Then we must discuss the question between us. Dark purple, now—how akin to the diapason of an organ—”

“Only not to-day, Professor; it is so cold, eh?”

Cécile leapt in. The Professor, who had travelled in Siberian snows on colder days than this, hunting for proofs of his theories about musical sounds, made room for her beside him; but Cécile somehow managed to drop into a seat next to Jack Heathcote.

“I shall have the pleasure,” said Professor Queech, “to read you, at some future date, a short pamphlet on—”

“Oh, but I say,” broke in Cécile, “did anyone note the lady in the next compartment?”

She looked at Arthur, who had got out for a moment.

“No. I don't think I noticed,” said Arthur.

Cécile was soon returning loaded.



Just then the train moved on.

“So droll!” said Cécile. “I am sure she is French, too. Stop!—her face put me in mind of someone—who is it? I can't think. But she looked pretty cold, I can tell you. And what do you think she was doing? Drinking spirit out of a flask, and up and up went the flask, and up and up went her little finger as she drained it. I thought it so droll!”

“The present shape of the modern flask,” said Professor Queech, “is due to a fact, not, I believe, generally known—”

“It's to be hoped she was alone,” said Jack Heathcote, with his shy, blue Yorkshire eyes fastened on the rug. What he was really thinking in his heart was this: “She has sat down beside me!”

“Alone?” said Cécile, wriggling on her seat. “No—that is, she was at the time; but she has somebody with her—I caught a glimpse of his back in the refreshment room—a very large, tall man. I believe she was drinking while he was away—what you call it—‘on the sly.’”

“But however did you know?” began Jack Heathcote. “Oh, you men! You are going to ask, how did I know that that particular gentleman was the gentleman she has with her, isn't it?”

“Yes,” confessed Jack.

“Why, it is very simple. She was sitting on a thick Khorsdabad rug made of long dark red hairs; and in the view which I had of his back I saw three of these hairs hanging to his light-coloured mauve overcoat.”

Captain Arthur Musgrave, who had stretched out his long legs, and closed his eyes, rather tired of Cécile's chatter, looked up a little, and dreamily said:

“What remarkable powers of observation, Miss Delisle! No wonder you despise a mere man.”

“Oh, men are nothing!” pouted Cécile, “don't you think so, Miss Newton? But what a back! so broad and strong. He was bending over the bar, sipping. A real Parisian back; he is French, certain.”

“Which do you like the best—Frenchmen or Englishmen?” asked Jack Heathcote.

Cécile smiled a little to herself.

“Frenchmen, sir,” she said.

On the other side of the partition—in the next compartment—things went not so smoothly.

"You are half drunk now, I believe," said the man in French.

"Well, that's nothing strange for me, is it?" answered the woman.

"And whose fault is that?"

"Yours, my friend."

"On my word, I hate the sight of you, Julie. I wish to God you were dead."

"I know that, Armand Lemaitre; but I shall live, unless you kill me—"

"That could be done—"

"Unless you kill me. And I'm not the meek lamb I have been. I shall live, and fight you on brandy—brandy—brandy."

She took from her pocket another flask and drank it dry—her third within the last two hours. She was hardly the same Julie of nineteen years ago. The semicircles beneath her eyes were nearly black; her flesh was wrinkled, and faded, and drink-besodden.

"You provoke me too much, Julie," said Lemaitre. "You are running a dreadful risk—"

"I know. You are a murderer in your heart. But I will run the risk. Take care I don't spoil your fun with the grand people you are going among, Armand Lemaitre"

Lemaitre smiled.

"Danton—that is my name. Pray, try and remember—Dr. Danton."

"And is it right—I ask you that—is it *right* for you to be going among these people, passing yourself off, and taking your pleasure, while I—"

"You will be comfortably lodged in the charming town of Seaborough. You know very well that you are not presentable in fashionable society. You have nothing to complain of."

"Oh, no? *Nothing* to complain of, Armand Lemaitre?"

"Danton—Dr. Danton."

"Nothing to complain of? Well, but suppose to-morrow or the next day I present myself at the Lodge among the grand folk and see whether *they* think I have anything to complain of or not?"

She had leant forward with glaring black eyes towards him; a puff of her loaded breath greeted his nostrils.

"Horrible hag!" he said to himself, and rose, walking to the window.

He pulled down the sash and looked out. The air was white and thick with snow, wheeling in the parching wind. You could not tell whether the eddying flakes were coming down from the heaven or up from the earth.

The train was passing over a desolate tract of the Yorkshire wolds, cut into, here and there, by vast deep ravines, through each of which brawled a swollen and foaming brook.

Lemaitre stood at the window full five minutes, pondering on Julie's last words: "*How if I present myself at the Lodge?*"

He turned round with a sudden jerk; and cried:

"What d'you mean, hey?"

"Ah, you are not going to have it all your own way, as you have done, Armand Lemaitre!" said Julie. "I have been a child long enough."

"You fool—can't you understand that I will *kill* you, if you talk to me like that?"



Lemaitre was over her.

Lemaitre came near her, his white teeth clenched, his paste-like face inflamed.

"Yes, I say, I know you are a murderer, Armand," repeated Julie; "but however it goes, you don't leave me out in the cold, if I can help it—"

"Be silent this moment, vile hag!"

"Silent? I? You think so—"

Jean Lemaitre cut her short by a blow with the back of his hand across her mouth.

"You beast!" cried Julie, and the flask she held in her hand went flying at Lemaitre's head. It struck him over the brow.

The next moment Lemaitre was over her, tugging murderously at her windpipe.

Professor Queech, on the other side of the partition, was just saying:

"I have written a little pamphlet on that very subject. A most extraordinary thing, now. The musical tones of the Jew's-harp—"

When Cécile cried:

"Stop! Did anyone see—"

She leapt up and flew to the window. It had seemed to her, as she looked that way, as if some large dark object had rushed past the glass outside. But by the time she had pulled down the sash and looked out, nothing was to be seen but snow, snow in the heaven above, and the air between, and on the earth below.

The train at that moment was dashing over a viaduct, bridging one of the great ravines which cut up all this lonely country-side into deep gullies. This one was called Thorghill Beck.

A minute's stoppage was made, a quarter of an hour later, at a small station half-way between York and Seaborough. But none of the party bound for Hillcrest had occasion to get out.

"I am almost sure," said Professor Queech as the train moved out again, "that I some time ago heard a—what shall I say?—a scream, it seemed, coming from that direction. I have ever since been considering the precise tone in its blending with the rattle of the train. Did you, Miss Newton, hear it?"

Miss Newton, a thin lady, tending towards old-maidishness, and sharp of tongue, said:

"Your continual effort to note the sounds around you make your ears over-keen, Professor. I am sure I heard no scream. Did you, Miss Delisle?"

"I heard *something* certainly," said Cécile; "but it seemed to me to come from outside the train."

In ten minutes the train drew up at Seaborough station, where carriages from Hillcrest awaited the guests.

As Cécile passed by the compartment in which she had seen the lady drain the flask, she glanced into it, and, to her surprise, saw it quite empty. Had the two, then, got out at the small station? Her clean-pencilled brows were knitting. She had seen no one pass over the platform there from the train. Her nature was intensely inquisitive. She did not like to be puzzled.

She moved away with the others; but stopped, and deliberately turned back. Surely, she must be mistaken. She could not have looked properly into the dimness of the compartment. The two people, she reasoned, *must* be there.

Once more she went to look, and this time held up high her little shapely chin, and gazed over the window into the carriage. She saw standing there, just about to come out, a man—a short, heavy-bodied man, with broad, tanned face, and a long goat-beard, such as Yankees wear, a man of the lower classes with foul and ragged clothes—in a first-class carriage.

Cécile turned away, and sped back, half frightened, to the others. It was a very evil face which she had seen. And its appearance there was as mysterious to her as the apparition of a ghost.

CHAPTER II.

LOVED BY TWO.

DR. DANTON did not arrive at Hillcrest Lodge that night, though he was expected. During the forenoon, however, of Christmas Day, he came in a hired cab from Seaborough. He explained that he had missed his train at King's Cross.

His introduction to the circle at Hillcrest Lodge was due to a sporting relative of Lady Hilton in Paris, with whom Dr. Danton had had close relations on the Paris Bourse. This relative had given Dr. Danton a number of introductions on his coming lately to England, and had written to Lady Hilton that she would do himself a kindness by entertaining the doctor, who was an accomplished man, and excellent company.

Three days after Christmas the house was full of people. Edith, new-come from Paris, was, of course, the centre of interest; and after her, Captain Arthur Musgrave, Lady Hilton's nephew. The Captain's face was brown with the Afghan sun. Till now, Lady Hilton had not seen him for seven years.

"I give him to you, darling," said Cécile to Edith in a corner of the drawing-room. "You know I am not easily pleased in the matter of the male material. But, *ma foi*, he will do, I think. What a moustache—and legs!"

"He is rather good-looking, isn't he?" said Edith.

"His legs are of incredible length, my dear! And that cut across the eyebrow is an improvement more than anything, I think. He is sure to fall in love with one or other of us, I should imagine."

"With you, more likely, dear."

"Oh, he needn't trouble! My choice is made already."

"Cécile! how you do talk."

"I mean it, really. You see that little man with the white hair and eyebrows, and straggling little moustache, talking to Lady Hilton? That's the man I am going to marry."

"Cécile! Oh, you are joking! You can't mean Jack Heathcote! Why, he is a mere yeoman, and you haven't known him a week."

"Yes, that's the man, darling. And he is dying of love for me, too. Just watch how he is leering round at us through the corner of his eye, while he is talking to Lady Hilton. But he will never have the—what you call it?—pluck to propose, unless I do it for him. The booby is so dreadfully afraid of me."

"And what do you think of him?" Edith pointed to Lemaitre, alias Dr. Danton, sitting *vis-à-vis* with Miss Newton.

Cécile was serious in a moment.

"Who is he?" she asked.

"I don't know, dear. A friend of my cousin Beaumont, I believe."

"What a huge man he is! And do you know that that tuft of imperial of his—is dyed?"

"Cécile! darling! what droll things you find out! and what eyes you have!"

"It is very simple, *Gazed . . . into the carriage, chérie*," said Cécile. "He is old, you know, that man; and he wants to pass for a youth. There are grey hairs under that dye. Dye, you know, does not glint so brightly under the light as the bare hair. You can always tell."

At the same moment, Harry Pendragon, a subaltern in

Arthur's hussar regiment, was saying, to the Honourable Lily Grandcourt:

"Yes; I agree with you; she is certainly very pretty. Quite a sculpture she looks, talking there to her friend, Mademoiselle Delisle."

"But have you noticed the very extraordinary resemblance between her and the—doctor there? Everyone is talking about it."

"Yes, they are alike certainly," said Harry Pendragon, a gentleman with slender legs and lithe sheer of waist. "One cannot avoid noticing it. That sort of coincidence does happen, you know."

Everyone, in fact, had seen the strange resemblance between Edith and the Frenchman—everyone except the Frenchman and Edith herself. Cécile said nothing on the subject, for it was not every thought that went on in that busy brain which came out from the talkative tongue.

Dancing, all through the Christmas season, was the order of the day. Lady Hilton, a massive old lady, with beautiful silver hair, dimples in her fresh, pink face, and the manners of a queen, despatched Jack Heathcote to the piano, and signalled to Cécile to take her harp.

Jack began to thump out a waltz, and Cécile, sitting by him, plucked the tune from her strings.

A general movement began, and Captain Arthur, opening his wide blue eyes, and standing straight upon his soldierly legs, looked wearily round the room.

There was some amount of hypocrisy in this survey; for before rising he had already decided whom he should seek as a partner. He sauntered lazily toward Edith. She was at the opposite end of the room. At the same time, from another direction, Dr. Danton was walking towards her with a like intention. They were at about equal distances from her, only the doctor's step was not a saunter, but a firm, decided advance. He reached Edith slightly before Arthur.

"If I may have the pleasure—" he said in French.

It was almost the first time he had spoken to her—so close together—alone. The eyes of the man and of the girl met.

Their eyes met—and for the moment could not part. In the man's the girl felt, rather than saw, some memory, some mystery, some strange power, some affinity. In the girl's the man felt an attraction which struck like a pain at his heart.

In the next instant Arthur came up. He was not much of a Frenchman, his ears being little accustomed to the sounds, and though he had heard Dr. Danton speak, had not caught what he said. He guessed, of course, that the doctor had come to ask her to dance, but with his cool, insolent *nonchalance*, he stepped forward and said:

"May I—Miss Wentworth?"

Danton did not remember to have heard the name distinctly before. Wentworth? The name was not unfamiliar to him. He had known, in his past, someone or other by that name. But whom? The thought passed through his mind like a mist, and faded. He forgot.

Edith glanced from one to the other.

Tall as Arthur was, Danton towered a head above him, though there was a slight stoop in his shoulders. Edith, too, stood high in her shoes; and with either of them would have made good pairing in the dance.

As Arthur spoke Danton glared a moment at him. Then said again, in his courtliest French way:

"Will you permit me?"

"You see you are a moment late," said Edith to Arthur. He bowed.

"The next, perhaps," she added.

He bowed again, with a suspicion of stiffness.

By this time she was on Danton's arm. He led her away. He had won the first contest.

It was the beginning of a long duel between the two men. And the beginning was a bad prophesy of how the fight would go for Captain Arthur Musgrave.



Cécile, plucking the air of the waltz from her gilt harp, glanced round, and saw Edith flitting in the arms of Dr. Danton. She lifted her eyebrows a little and said:

"Do you know Dr. Danton at all?"

"I?" answered Jack Heathcote. "Not I."

He was bending low over the piano, in the seventh heaven; yet flurried and shy, seeing her so dangerously near him.

"Don't you like—the dance?" she said, after a little.

"I?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Middling, you know. All depends if I have the right partner."

"What do you call 'the right partner'?"

"Someone that I like very much, you know. Someone small——"

"I see. You don't like tall ladies."

"No. Someone small, and——"

"But playing for other people to dance is dull. You don't like that, do you?"

"I don't mind it—not a bit. If I have someone that I like very much to play with me——"

"Suppose the person you have playing with you is not small—what then?"

"Oh, well, but—I say—she usually is, you see."

"But can you dance really well?" said Cécile. "Can you dance like a Frenchman? Because, if so, I mean to have a dance myself presently."

"Is that so? Yes, I believe I can dance, if I can't do anything else. And do you mean that you will have me for——"

"A partner? Yes, I mean. But doesn't the loss of the middle toe of your left foot interfere at all with your movement?"

"There now!" cried Jack Heathcote, "however did you know?"

"As if one could help knowing!" said Cécile. "Doesn't the leather of your boot always sink in just over the spot when you make a sudden step?"

"By Jove, now. Think of noticing that. I had it cut off when I was a boy. It was crushed by a stone when I was barefooted, bird-nesting."

"And here—just here, at the back of the neck, under your collar—you have a big scar, sir."

"Oh, well now, this is too much, you know!" cried Heathcote. "How do you know that?"

"You fancy me simple, I think? Why, one guesses that by the way you put down your finger behind, and screw your neck irritably, and settle your collar—even by the way you hold the neck sometimes. One is not blind."

"But you—you see everything."

"Then people should hold their neck straight—like so—then one would not know. Straight up, like a Frenchman!"

She laughed. But Heathcote did not see the joke. Two minutes later he said suddenly:

"But I say, which do you like the best, now—a Frenchman or an Englishman?"

"A Frenchman, sir," she said.

"But you don't *dislike* an Englishman, do you?"

"Oh, no—not *dislike* him. We must talk of that later; I am going now——"

When the second waltz was beginning, with Miss Newton at the piano, Edith, still on Dr. Danton's arm, looked shyly aside for the coming of the Captain to claim her. As the music began she saw him coming, with his languid saunter, towards her.

"I promised——" she began.

Danton bent his head down to a level with hers, frowning.

"The next—give me the next!" he said eagerly.

"I promised——"

"No; you did not promise," he said, speaking rapidly and intensely. "You said 'perhaps.' Give me the next!"

Edith looked at him, surprised at his earnestness. Once more their eyes met in fixed scrutiny. Then Edith's curving lashes drooped upon her face, and a slight shiver passed through her.

"The next?" he said.

A faint "Yes" came from her lips.

By the time Arthur had approached the spot she was once more out in the waltz. A strangely faint, subdued feeling seemed to have overcome her; her motions, as she danced, seemed to be hardly her own, but to be imparted to her by her partner; a dreamy, rather pleasant languor half paralysed her will. She tried to shake it off, without result.

Arthur's shoulders just shrugged a little when he found himself ousted a second time, and he walked away with his usual unconcern.

On the third day of the New Year came off the great event of the gathering at Hillcrest Lodge, the ball at which Lady Hilton had determined to celebrate in style the return of her nephew from his Afghan campaign, and the final home-coming of her niece-in-law. All the great ones of the county were present, as well as the chief magnates of Seaborough and York. The suites of halls of the chateau-like mansion were brilliant with thousands of wax candles, and all the guests wore costumes of the period of Marie Antoinette at the time of the greatest splendour of this queen of fashion and of France.

All through the night Cécile was in a bad temper. Something, no one knew what, visibly annoyed her. When Jack Heathcote came nervously bowing before her, asking for a dance, she said:

"Please find a partner who does not mind being bumped about. I had enough at our last waltz together, thank you."

And yet Jack was looked upon as the perfection of dancing form by the village lasses on a certain Yorkshire property not a hundred miles away. He stared, and retired backward. Cécile presently went dancing with Harry Pendragon.

But her soul was not in it. She broke loose from her partner when she saw Edith standing for a moment by herself in an alcove.

"Edith, you make me vexed!" she said. "Why can't you dance with anybody but that heavy brute? People will notice it!"

"Why, darling Cécile, how cross you look!" cried Edith. She was dressed as the Duchesse de Polignac, the friend of Marie Antoinette, in a gown of white satin, with full underskirt, and embroidered all round with gold, turquoise, amethyst, topaz, and brilliant jewellery. The upper skirt was caught back with pale blue, similarly embroidered. She wore her hair high and *poudré*, and appeared a constellation of magnificent diamond and turquoise ornaments; she was loveliness itself, and her large brown eyes, lit and animated with excitement, outshone all jewels whatever.

Cécile stood before her, tapping the floor with her slipper.

"Do you like this Danton, then?" she asked.

"I! Why, Cécile, no! not particularly. It merely happens that I have granted him most of the dances. I can hardly explain it, dear."

"Don't dance with him any more! Huge bulk he is!"

At this moment there was a movement towards supper.

In the supper-room were a number of little round and oval tables; while in the centre, at a larger square table, sat Lady Hilton, attired as Marie Antoinette, in rich brocade, wearing the Hilton family jewels round her neck as a superb collar; a turquoise velvet cap, clasped with jewels, on her white *coiffure*, and a *bandeau* of family jewels under her cap. Her court mantle was fastened at the shoulders with a tiara of diamonds, widened out so as to clasp the cloak from shoulder to shoulder. All the tables were decorated with flowers, some of them from the south of France; while dishes of strawberries, apricots, grapes, and pineapples were in luxurious contrast to the falling snow outside.



Sitting with Professor Queech.

The room was illuminated with silver candelabra containing wax candles. At every arched door were immense screens of magnificent Beauvais tapestry, while here and there, throughout all the rooms, were huge church-candles in gilded stands five feet high.

At the central table, side by side, sat Edith and Arthur among the Queen's "Court."

"I haven't once—not once," said Arthur, "danced with you to-night. That is very hard lines, you know."

"You will not die of it," said Edith; "you have not shown very much eagerness in asking me. Procrastination is the thief of partners."

"You do not know whether I will die of it," answered Arthur, feasting his eyes on her down-bent face. "Misery is not a skin disease. I, at any rate, do not wear my sorrows on my sleeve."

"I am sorry if you are sorry," she said simply. "But the night is only half over, and I could dance for days without stopping."

"May I take it, then, that the rest of the night will be mine?" he asked.

"Not all of it?" she said, lifting her brows archly.

"Yes—all."

She looked up into his face, half shyly, and laughed, without speaking.

"All?" he said, near to her ear.

She nodded her head up and down, laughing a soft, gay laugh.

Soon after they rose from the table, and the guests streamed back to the dancing-halls. The suite of rooms led one into the other, so that the vista of magnificent and brilliantly-lighted apartments was superb. Over three thousand wax candles were used, in addition to the electric light, which was made to simulate wax candles. The candles were unshaded, in imitation of the style of the French in the last century.

The great cedar drawing-room was used as the central ballroom. It was so called because panelled in cedar, a perfect background for the fine Vandyke family portraits hung round it.

The ceiling was white and gold, and there were two large

arched windows, in one of which the band was stationed, and they, too, wore a white and gold dress of the French court. The room was lighted with five great crystal chandeliers with wax candles, suspended from the ceiling, with a high candelabrum in each corner, and with two smaller ones on each side of the great marble and alabaster mantelpiece. Palms were placed about; and flowers, forming Louis Quinze garlands, were festooned from one point to the other. The principal feature of all was the unshrouded light—it was day at midnight, but a chaster, holier day—the noon of the fairies.

Miss Newton, who did not patronise the dance, was sitting far back near the panelling with Professor Queech, who was dressed very absurdly in a long robe intended to personate Cagliostro. The Honourable Lily Grandcourt, a plump, large beauty, with a classical face rather lacking in expression, happened just then to sail past them in the arms of lank Harry Pendragon.

"Those now," said the Professor, "make a pretty couple. Notice the exquisite timing of their foot-fall with the beat of the conductor's *bâton*. The laws of sound are of such a nature—"

"But," broke in Miss Newton, "how is it that the two principal guests of the evening, Captain Musgrave and Miss Wentworth, are not seen dancing together?"

"Ah, yes, that does strike one, does it not? She dances rather with the French doctor. There may, my dear Miss Newton, be a lack of harmonious affinity—"

"I don't see her anywhere," said Miss Newton, looking round.

Edith had vanished.

"A lack of harmonious affinity," repeated the Professor. "May I ask you now, dear Miss Newton, if you will do me the honour—"

"Suppose there is a lack of harmonious affinity between us, Professor," said Miss Newton, smirking.

"I hope not, I believe not, if I may be allowed to say so, Miss Newton. From the first hour in which I saw you, I have realised—"

"But look at *Mlle. Cécile*! She is apparently not very pleased with her partner, Mr. Heathcote," cried Miss Newton, dreading an outbreak of sentiment from the Professor. "Her eyes are wandering all over the room, and there is a distinct frown on her face."

"I fancy she is looking about for her friend, Miss Wentworth," said the Professor.

"Oh, that is it, without doubt," answered Miss Newton. "Edith is very likely with Dr. Danton in the conservatory, I should think. Have you observed the singular likeness between her and the doctor?"

"A most extraordinary thing, now," said Professor Queech musingly. "I will tell you a fact, not, I believe, generally known—"

"Well, Professor?"

"It has to do with children—children not yet born. I knew a musician who told me that a lady whom he instructed in singing, had a daughter soon afterwards, who greatly resembled him in face. He attributed it to the fact that during the critical time the mother had looked up to him as her instructor, and he had had a certain influence over her mind. What is more, it turned out that, as the child grew up, the musician had the same strong influence over her mind which he had had over the mother's, only to a much greater extent."

"Oh, Professor Queech, what things you do say!" tittered Miss Newton. "And do you mean to imply—?"

"That Dr. Danton may, by some chance, have known the mother of Miss Wentworth at just such a critical time," said the Professor, "and may, by some possibility, have had just such an influence over her mind. Of course, it is a scientific hypothesis. But talking of music and musicians, there is this fact to be noted, not, I believe, generally known—"



"You are a singular kind of vermin!"

"Come," cried Miss Newton, starting up. "We will dance, if you will!"

Outside in the conservatory, in a little bower of palms, sat Edith and Danton.

"I never knew my mother," Edith was saying.

"Who was your father?"

"Ernest Wentworth—brother to Lady Hilton's husband."

Again the mist of memory passed through Danton's brain, and faded.

"Why did you not know your mother? Did she die?" he asked.

"No."

"Then why?"

"She—she was not liked by the Hiltons. She—she was not of the same class as they. They did not—approve of her conduct. They adopted me when my father died."

"I see. Is she alive?"

"I—don't know."

"I should have seen her somewhere—or your father," said Danton musingly, smoothing down his imperial.

"What makes you think that?" asked Edith.

"Because you remind me of someone whom I have known. It is strange I can't tell whom."

"Yes, it is strange," she said dreamily.

"From the moment I saw you," he went on, "I seemed to have known you all my life. You were never a stranger to me. I knew you as well as I know my own life, at the first glance. You are part of me."

Her eye-lashes were lying in long curvature on her pallid cheeks.

"I cannot listen to all that," she murmured, ready, she knew not why, to weep.

"You must. You are part of me. Can't you understand? We are made out of the same piece, our two souls."

The man's face was inflamed with passion, his eyes alight, like a serpent's fixed upon a fluttering bird.

"You cannot say 'no' to me," he went on. "You cannot rebel against me. You are given to me. It would kill me—it would kill us both—if you cut yourself out of me. You are part of my soul—part of my flesh and bone—"

"Oh, pray, let me go!" she murmured low. "I feel so faint here. I am very—very—young—"

"Stay and listen to me. Why do you wish to go?"

"I—promised—someone—to dance—"

"Promise me not to dance to-night."

"But—I don't think you ought to ask."

"But I do ask. And it is not so much to ask. Will you do as I tell you?"

"Well—"

"Do you promise, then?"

"As you are so insistent. But I must go—let me go now."

She rose with a sudden effort; stood a moment still; then ran away, casting a half scared glance behind.

At the same moment a figure stood before Danton at the opening of the bower. It was Captain Arthur Musgrave.

He stood looking coldly with his air of languor, at Danton, while Danton squinted up sideways from under one lifted eye at him.

"You are a singular kind of vermin!" said Captain Arthur Musgrave in perfectly cool, speculative tones, as though he were discussing the flavour of a cigar.

Danton sprang, at once, erect, with passion in his eyes. Arthur, the privileged guest of the night, was dressed in his close red hussar regimentals. Danton had on a rich court dress, which made his mighty frame look even huger; his coat was of mauve brocade, full skirted, and embroidered with gold; the waistcoat of mauve satin, embroidered in floral design; while knee-breeches of shot mauve and gold, silk stockings, court shoes, powdered hair, lace ruffles, jabot, and sword, made up a costume, correct in every particular, of one of Louis XVI's courtiers.

"A singular kind of vermin!" Arthur repeated.

This time Danton bowed gracefully, with his right hand over his heart.

"I chanced to be passing near," drawled Arthur, "and heard you trying to persuade a lady to break a promise made to me—"

"Trying—and succeeding," interrupted Danton with a smile—a dangerous smile. The man's blood was up.

"Personally, I don't care a curse whether you succeeded or not," said Captain Arthur Musgrave, pulling his moustache. "I merely wish, now, to know whether you prefer to take your departure at once from the company of ladies and gentlemen here, or submit to be caned like the cur you are."

Danton bowed.

"I prefer to be caned," he said.

"All right. I'll cane you. I would do it now, only I don't happen to have the weapon with me. To-morrow will do. You may look out for it."

Danton bowed. He had in his hand a thin, flexible little malacca cane, gold-headed. He held it out to Arthur, and with another bow, said:

"May I accommodate you?"

In a moment the switch was in Arthur's hand and swish, swish, down came the stinging chastisement upon the Frenchman's face. Arthur threw the cane on the ground.

Danton bore it grandly. He did not flinch. When it was over, he bowed.

"When may I expect to meet you?" he asked.

"To meet me? In a duel, you mean? Well—it is not the custom, among Englishmen; but as you are a foreigner and wear the dress of a gentleman, I suppose I must do you the honour of permitting you to fight me. I shall appoint a second to wait upon you."

He turned upon his heel and walked away. Danton resumed his seat, put up his hand to his stinging face—and smiled.

(To be continued.)



A LITTLE more than seven hundred years ago there arose in Japan a great civil war between two rival families, each of which aspired to the high office of Shogun, sometimes called Tycoon. One of these families was called the Taira, the other, the Minamoto, but this has little to do with the present story.

After a long, fierce struggle the reigning Shogun, a Minamoto, was deposed and forced into exile; and many of the richest and most powerful nobles shared his ruin.

The new Shogun, of course, created a new aristocracy—for thus are written the pages of history.

As time went on, and prosperity and peace spread golden silence over the land, it began to be hinted among all classes that the new ruler was a true father to his people, and that the terrible struggle just past was but inauguration to a period of happiness that should eclipse all memories of previous grief or woe.

Later it began to be rumoured that the new Shogun's love for his subjects was such that he sometimes travelled through the country in the guise of a simple peasant, that he might learn and know the true needs of all classes. This, however, was so totally unlike the course usually pursued by high dignitaries in that land of etiquette, that the report gained but little credence.

Among the noblemen who had suffered most cruelly through the overthrow of the old Shogunate was the Daimyo (feudal lord) Sano Genzaimon. One by one he had seen his possessions devoured by the insatiable fiend of battle. His only son had fallen with a spear snapped deep in his young breast; his daughter, wed before the contest to a noble of the opposing faction, was denied all intercourse with her unfortunate parents; and now that the end was come, and poverty and grief held out lean, eager hands towards them, the aged pair fled by night to a distant province where, at least, they might escape the pity of their enemies.

By the sale of a few jewels and robes of state which they were enabled to retain, they secured a sum sufficient to allow them to rent a miserable hovel of one room, and to purchase from day to day a meagre quantity of tea, rice and millet.

A greater contrast to the luxurious life to which they were accustomed could not be imagined, and only their

great devotion to each other gave them strength to suffer and endure.

It was upon a desolate afternoon towards the close of an unusually rigorous winter, that a priest, foot-sore and convulsed with cold, knocked at the unpainted curtain of their little door. All through the morning snow had been sifting and fluttering down from a dreary sky, but now it was coming in great hurtling armfuls; massing against the fences and tree trunks, and laying an effacing sheet over the wavering suburban roads. Twice had the priest knocked without gaining a response; at the third repetition he lifted his voice and cried:

"Open, in the name of Lord Buddha!"

In a few seconds there came from within the sound of a soft moving and bustling, then the curtains were drawn slightly apart, and the worn but aristocratic face of a middle-aged woman appeared in the opening.

"Pardon, honourable lady," chattered the priest between his bows. "I am deeply humiliated at thus forcing myself upon thy hospitality, but indeed I am faint with weariness and can proceed no further."

The woman drew a deep sigh, as, with a voice of exquisite tone and quality, she replied:

"Ah, my poor man, the deep humiliation is that I must refuse thy petition. My husband is absent, and thou knowest that it is impossible for me then to admit a masculine visitor, even a priest of Buddha."

"This custom does not prevail among peasants and labourers, thought the priest," but aloud he said: "When may thy husband return?"

"I have awaited his coming this past hour," she replied, looking anxiously across the waste of snow. "He but journeyed to the nearest village to purchase food and fuel."

"Grant, then," said the priest, "that I await his coming at the doorstep, for no other shelter is at hand and my feet refuse to bear me farther on."

"Willingly, willingly," exclaimed the lady, and, hurrying in, she handed him a teapot filled with boiling water, one of a smaller size containing a pinch of dried tea-leaves, and a little bowl for drinking.

"It is the best I have," she murmured sadly. "There is no rice nor millet with which to knead the cakes."

Thanking her again and again, the priest began to

brew the comforting draught. He poured the steaming water into the smaller teapot, from thence also immediately into the bowl; the decoction in the process gained an almost imperceptible tinge and odour; but he drank down cup after cup with famished eagerness. There was no doubt as to the sincerity of his need. After watching him for some moments, the good woman silently rose to her feet, and, wrapping her thin shoulders in a robe of cheap, wadded cotton, she stepped out into the narrow, wind-swept portal.

The priest looked up in surprise.

"My poor man," she said, "I cannot see thee suffer. All day I have been housed and sheltered, and now will I yield thee such scant comfort as my poor dwelling can allow. Do thou retire within, and I will remain upon the doorstep until my husband shall return."

"Nay, nay," cried the priest, moved to tears by her noble unselfishness. "Thy soothing drink has warmed and restored me. I am well able to journey on, and should I encounter thy noble husband, I will crave his permission to return with him."

After much courteous parleying the priest hurried away, and the good lady, drawing close the curtain and the paper blind within, sighed and murmured sadly: "For the first time do I rebel at a maxim of the great Confucius. Surely the thought of storms and suffering priests of Buddha had not entered his great heart when he wrote: 'In her husband's absence a virtuous woman may not draw the curtains to a stranger, whatever his age, condition or estate.'" She heaped the little earthenware fire-pot with charcoal, although the last bundle of charred twigs was growing sadly meagre, then she brought forth their slender supply of tea, and drew from its hiding-place a small box of dried orange rinds which are sometimes used among the poorer classes in default of their cherished tea-leaves.

The kettles and the china bowl which the priest had used were frozen to the doorstep as she went to bring them in, and scarcely were they washed, polished and restored to their places, when she heard the sound of clogs at the door.

"Open," cried the priest. "Thy husband is helpless with cold."

With trembling, nervous fingers, she snatched aside the rude blind, and there indeed was the old nobleman, lying senseless in the arms of the priest.

"Do not be alarmed, kind lady," the latter hastened to exclaim at the sight of her terrified face. "It is only the cold and fatigue. Warmth and rest will quickly restore him."

The old wife, as the tears glittered down the wrinkles on her cheek cried: "Thou art sent by Buddha. Hadst thou not gone, he would have perished in the snow."

As the good priest had promised, warmth and comfort soon effected a thorough cure, so that, at the end of an hour, they were all sitting about the brazier, the men smoking tiny native pipes and sipping incessantly the tea-tinged cups of hot water which the hostess so assiduously filled.

With the night the cold deepened. As there was but one room and one supply of bed covering in the poor establishment, it was tacitly understood that they should pass the hours of sleep nodding and dozing about the brazier.

The priest, having felt from the first that his hostess was a woman of no common origin, dared not suggest that she should sleep in the presence of a stranger.

So they crouched in a tiny ring, speaking drowsily of the storm and the cold, and starting suddenly now and

then, as a vagrant gust sent a blast through the little house, and rasped from off the roof tiles the masses of frozen snow.

The charcoal and rice which Sano had been to the village to procure were lost and buried in the snow ere the priest had happened upon the purchaser, and now the old wife laid their few remaining pieces of fuel, inch by inch, upon the angry little fire, wondering wretchedly what would become of them when the last fragment had been consumed.

Soon were her fears realised, and while yet the night and the storm were raging without, the blaze died away, and the glow took on a sullen pallor.

Sano looked towards his wife as if to see the reason of her inattention, and the poor woman hid her face to avoid his look.

"It is the last, Sano," she murmured. "There is no more."

"But our guest may not perish with cold," cried her husband. "Is there nothing which we can burn and so defend him from this bitter night?"

He sprang to his feet and hurried nervously about the cheerless room.

Alas! there was nothing but the wooden and paper blinds, and the wooden grooves in which they ran.

"The hovel is not mine," mused Sano, musing over them. "I cannot be a despoiler of other men's property." At this moment his glance fell upon three earthen flower pots, in which were growing the only treasures of his sad and broken life; a plum tree of that rare and beautiful variety in which the limbs droop downwards like a cluster of pliant willow wands, giving the effect, when in full bloom, of a fountain of flowers; a cherry tree not two feet high but of perfect, dainty symmetry; and a pine tree, dwarfed and trained into a fascinating grotesqueness.

The latter was dearest of all. It had been part of his old life of wealth and power, had come down to him from father and grandfather, four generations ago, and its mimic branches were knotted and lichenized with the weight of full two hundred years. Without a word he broke the cherry tree to the root, and, snapping it into faggots, laid it on the smouldering coals.

The priest exclaimed in protest, but too late. At the end of an hour the plum tree was sacrificed, and the old dame covered her face with her sleeves.

But when, as the last charred embers of the plum branches faded and fell apart, he rose and moved towards the little pine tree, his wife threw herself upon the floor and in his pathway, crying: "Sano—Sano Genzaimon, not the pine tree also. The souls of thy ancestors forbid it. I charge thee, withhold thy hand from the pine tree."

"And shall our guest, a servant of Buddha, perish of the cold?" He thrust down her clinging hands, but his lips quivered.

"The daylight is close upon us," the poor woman cried. "I will haste to the hills for faggots. Do not, in Buddha's name, sacrifice thy cherished pine tree."

"Heed the words of thy noble lady," broke in the priest. "Do not, in the name of Buddha, ruthlessly destroy the tree of thy ancestor's planting."

Sano stood motionless, and the priest, hurrying to the entrance, drew the curtains apart.

"See!" he exclaimed, his face turned to his host. "The dawn even now is at thy door. Concern thyself no longer; I must be upon my way, and will soon direct some faggot boy to thy dwelling."

The wind had died away; the storm had emptied its

full measure of snow upon the frozen earth, and as the priest peered out over the dawn-vaguelandscape, a grey-blue sheet spread out before him, broken only by the rugged darkness of a distant mountain.

To all the entreaties and protestations of his kind host, he made reply:

"I can tarry no longer; it is full time that I should bestir myself." At the moment of parting he turned to Sano and said: "Wilt thou not acquaint me with thy whole name, that I may offer it to Buddha, and thank thee, through him, for thy wondrous kindness of this night?"

With an unconscious lifting of the head the answer was given:

"I am Sano Tsuyeno Genzaimon, once Daimyo of the province of Kaga, in the city of Kinzu."

"Is it possible! Is it possible!" gasped the priest. "I knew that thou wert of fallen estate, but to find thee the Daimyo of Kaga! Art thou an enemy of the ruling Shogun?"

"Nay, my good priest, friend or enemy I am of little consequence. I did but return my knights and my possessions to the master who had given all. I am no rebel; only a ruined and broken man whose one friend is Death."

"To think of it, to think of it," murmured the priest again and again; then thanking them once more in the name of Buddha, he started out upon the waste of snow.

It had seemed but a few moments after his departure, when Sano and his wife, now muffled in ragged bed-covering in lieu of fire, heard a violent knocking at the door. Opening it after some little delay, they found a great sack of charcoal, a measure of rice, a keg of the finest saké (rice wine), together with smaller packets of tea, tobacco and sweetmeats.

There was no sign of human attendance, only a dotted path of fresh tracks leading out over the snow.

"A gift from Buddha!" cried the dame, in a fine quiver of joy and excitement.

"'Tis indeed a swift reward that hath been sent us," rejoined her husband, "but I had no thought of such a wondrous requital when I harboured his pilgrim servant."

* * * * *

Some weeks after this delightful happening, Sano and his wife were thrown into great agitation by the visit of a royal messenger bearing a summons for them to appear before the Shogun at Kamakura.

"Alas! Sano, what can it be?"

"Peradventure it is death," was the low reply. "I had not dreamt that in our poverty and old age it was possible that we should be hounded to further grief and ignominy."

However, despite these gloomy forebodings, Sano recognised the order as imperative, and announced to the messenger his intention of preparing for the journey at once. In three days' time all was in readiness, but what was the astonishment of the old couple to find, awaiting them at their very threshold, two richly lacquered palanquins, gilded with the Shogun's crest, and attended by a goodly number of bearers and running footmen.

"Is this a mockery?" cried Sano, with a passionate gleam of the old fierce light in his eyes.

The servants prostrated themselves to earth, saying

that they had been detailed for the purpose of transferring the royal guests to Court. Further than this they knew nothing. With deep misgivings, the pair ensconced themselves in the gorgeous conveyances, and were soon upon the road to Kamakura, then a great city and the seat of the Shogunate.

At last the city was reached. The ponderous castle gates of wood and bronze and polished brass swung open at their approach, and the vast throng of warriors pacing about the wide, pebbled courtyard gave conviction to Sano's fears that he had been brought thither for purposes of revenge. Yet, to the old noble, it was pleasant to see once more the glitter and splendour of armed knights. The play of light upon brazen helmets and imbricated breastplates, the flash of tasselled spears, the glint of curved and polished shields, the clank of metal heels upon the stones, the hiss of moving silk and and steel, the blending of light and colour, of strength and beauty, filled his old heart like wine, and led him back in memory to his own proud castle and his splendid ranks of knight and vassal.

Their palanquins were not set down until the very portal of the castle door was reached, an exceptional honour, it being the custom for all except princes of the blood to dismount at the gate and proceed with retinue on foot to the entrance of the audience chamber.

But Sano no longer questioned "Is it mockery?" Beneath his poor and faded robes the old warrior's heart beat high, and the light of other days was on his face as he stepped into the splendid hall and bade his wife "Fear not, but follow me." There was a great conclave of nobles and warriors assembled, and they sat facing each other in two long rows, forming a glittering vista which terminated in the Shogun's raised dais of lacquer and cushioned silk.

At their approach the Shogun rose and stood waiting. To the left of his throne was placed a plum tree in dazzling fullness of blossoms, growing from a vessel of bronze and gold.

At the other hand, a little cherry tree shone in a transport of flowers.

As the visitors knelt for the royal obeisance, the Shogun held forth his hand. "Rise, Sano," he said, in tones of suppressed gladness, "and see if thou dost recognise thy guest."

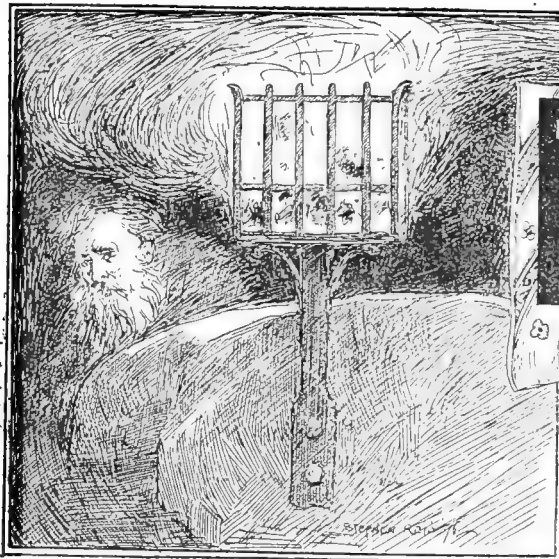
Quicker than her husband, the old dame gave an upward glance and fell again to the earth, crying: "It is the priest, Sano. It is the poor priest."

After explaining to his court in a few brief, glowing sentences the obligations under which this worthy pair had placed him, the Shogun said:

"And now, Sano Tsuyeno Genzaimon, thy castle and thy lands are again thine own. Be but as loyal to thy new master as thou wert to the old, and I will know thee as my truest friend and supporter. For the plum and the cherry tree which thou didst destroy that I might not suffer, behold I return them in kind"—pointing to the trees on either hand—"and, besides, with each will be given thee a new province to rule and govern; Sakurai, on the western coast of Nippon, the province of the cherry tree, Umèdo, in Shikoku Island, field of the plum, and for the pine tree, which thou wert willing to sacrifice also, the broad heritage of Matsuyama (Pine Mountains) that lies near the sacred city of Kyoto."

MARY McNEIL SCOTT.





THE WRECKERS OF SCILLY

BY
CHAS EDWARDS

SUMMARY.

THE scene is laid at St. Agnes, one of the Scilly Islands. The inhabitants live by the booty obtained from vessels wilfully led to destruction by false beacons. The only two exceptions are Nigel Prideaux and Damaris Nance, his sweetheart. Manuel Nance, Damaris' father, is Nigel's greatest enemy. The *King Hal*, a warship laden with Spanish plunder, is lured to destruction, and wrecked off Troy Town. All hands are either drowned in the sea or killed by the inhabitants, except Sir Francis Seymour, who is rescued by Nigel. Damaris takes food to the survivor, who falls in love with her. Nigel arranges to secure Sir Francis' escape from the cave.

CHAPTER VII.

A RACE FOR A WIFE.

THAT night, when the moon was just walking from the cold waters of the Atlantic, our hero guided Sir Francis Seymour to his little boat, and successfully conveyed him to Hugh Town on St. Mary's.



Manuel Nance and two of the men.

One petition he made, and the granting of it was the only one condition Nigel asked in requital of his services.

"Thou wilt say no word of what in my heat I told thee about my brethren here? There must be no thought of avenging the deeds they may have done, for, after all, they are my kinsmen, and the playmates of my infancy."

To this the knight agreed, though it was against the inclination that had grown upon him during the later hours of his imprisonment in the cave. A suspicion had arisen in him that the St. Agnes men were guilty not only of horrid barbarity towards the soldiers and sailors of the *King Hal*, but that they had made some alliance with the storm to wreck the vessel.

"But, good Nigel," he demurred, "if perchance—I think it not probable, though fortune may rule it so—if perchance a box or two of gold or treasure may be vomited by the greedy sea——"

"And if 'tis so, thou must make no claim upon it. Why, sir, art thou not grateful for thy dear life that thou canst not forego such stuff as that——"

"Right good stuff, too, lad, as mayhap anon thou'lt perceive. But be it so. I will tell the tale that I, by the skin of my teeth, escaped, and not man nor unbroken spar besides."

Nigel landed the knight in the Bay of Porth Cressa, but did not accompany him towards the houses, and thus towards midnight he had returned to St. Agnes, shunning the moonlit water where he could, and reached his pallet unobserved.

The next day Manuel Nance and two of the men in whom he reposed most confidence spent divers pleasant hours in telling over the gold that had come to them.

The Lord of St. Agnes had not drunk so deep with the rest the previous evening but that when he lay on his bed ascheme recurred to him by which he hoped to gain advantage. Wretch though he was, he yet knew something of the pangs of remorse. But he was ignorant of the deeper truths of human nature. He fancied, forsooth, that by the bestowal of money-bags upon Holy Church he could get such absolution for his sins as should make him light of soul and innocent as a child. He therefore designed to visit the holy Abbot of Tavistock, whose fame and importance were unrivalled in all the West country, and to make a barter with him on these premises.

Nor was this all. Nance was no fool, and read the times as well at least as most men of the mainland. If he secured the good will of Holy Church, it was well. But he could feel wholly safe only by gaining the interest of the civil arm also.

Here, too, money might do much—that he knew well; for had not he annually sent a present of various rich fabrics and jewels to the acting Lord in St. Mary's, thereby deterring that just-minded worthy from giving air and credence to the cavils that might reach him about the island and its people?

But it were better still if he could have a blood alliance with this governor who exercised nominal rule in all the Archipelago.

And this might be so easy of arrangement. Christopher Layton, the governor in question, possessed a family of six sons. They had no spotless reputation—indeed, in St. Mary's they were a by-word. But what of that? Young blood will gallop after its own fashion; and, besides, these fine youths were not of a temper to bear being penned in an island where their days were passed in inaction and murmuring.

Nance, therefore, leapt to the thought that he could in no way better protect himself against the charges that might some day be cast in his teeth than by marrying his daughter to one of Master Layton's sons. She was full ripe for the alliance. He had marked her beauty and fine growth even before her nurse had warned him of both. Further, he had marked what Nurse Cochran had not—namely, the indignation with which she met his words in dispraise of young Nigel Prideaux, who was confessedly the comeliest youth on the island. This, and the youth's looks towards Damaris whenever they were near each other, was one of the strongest causes of his exceeding violence against Nigel.

And so Nance fondled the idea as he lay abed, and resolved the next day to send a messenger with overtures to Master Layton. It was all one which of the Layton youths was chosen. But he flattered himself the love of five thousand golden crowns would not fail to get Damaris a husband. It was in truth a princely bribe, and out of question the father would be cunning enough to take it in the right light, and be mum about it.

"This arranged," said Nance to himself, "either St. Agnes shall go into other hands, or I will manage it differently. I like not to think of the burdens on my conscience."

And having thus coaxed a little tranquility into his soul he fell asleep. But for all his self-cozening he had dream visitations in the night which made him in the morning increasingly anxious to clinch the bargains he had planned.

The gold and other treasures were stacked in the very room in which Nance slept. There was no peril of being robbed, for the St. Agnes men were loyal to each other.

Damaris had gone to bed that night with the chink of gold in her ears, and when she awoke in the morning her father was again busy piling the pieces for her marriage portion.

James Pender, the elder, was commissioned by Nance to cross the sound ere the tide turned, and to see Master Layton on the subject. Had he dared, Pender would have refused such a business. He had hoped Damaris might fall to the lot of his own son, for there was little choice on St. Agnes, and was not he the best man in the island after Nance himself? But he was won over to the task, as much as aught else by the hints that the lordship of St. Agnes might be his own in a month or two, if he would but be patient and wait.

He found Master Layton busy in getting out his vessel for a distinguished voyager, who was none else than Sir Francis Seymour. For awhile he could not interfere to explain his mission; but when he told it, uncouthly and grossly enough, the lord of St. Mary's burst into a laugh, and said it would please him mightily.

He found
Master Lay-
ton busy.



The governor's sons were sent for, and in their presence the matter was again related, more in detail. Truth to tell, but for the golden crowns (of which Master Christopher was to take the half), the youths would have mocked at the idea that any one of them should take a wife out of St. Agnes.

But the money made all the difference. And besides, it needed not Pender's description of Damaris to suggest to them that the girl herself was no ordinary Scilly maiden. The rumour of her beauty had already spread about St. Mary's, and the priests of Tresco had made a fair report of her intelligence and grace.

"I'll have no brawling over it," said Master Christopher, with an affectation of alarm. "Certes, there be no more foolish way of puffing up the pride of wenches than by making them think they be worth fighting about. So settle it peaceably."

But this they were unable to do. Their imaginations began to riot about poor Damaris, until they rated her as a Helen, and the thought of the gold pieces, and what might be done with them, made them look angrily at each other, and discountenance each other's plans contemptuously.

As fortune would have it, however, Sir Francis himself came to their relief.

Told of the dilemma, though not of the prize, he said laughingly:

"My good friend, never saw I stouter youths. Let each strip himself to his smock, and the one who first reaches the island be the winner."

The idea delighted the governor, and was not distasteful to the young men, who were all much at home in the water.

It was thus agreed upon. And the day being unusually propitious, and Master Nance's eagerness for a settlement as great as theirs, they straightway drank a cup or two of ale, and in the presence of a crowd of the islanders and Sir Francis himself, took to the water by the rocks of the Fort hill, nearest to St. Agnes.



She saw the boat at length return.

Pender accompanied them in his boat, and a boat of St. Mary's also went with them, that the vanquished might later in the evening return.

Could Damaris have known what was in progress, she would have found diversion in watching the issue of this singular love race. And the more so that she would know in her heart how foolish and futile such an effort to win her affections was bound to be.

But she knew nothing of it until her nurse began to babble to her about the stalwart young strangers who were descending the gorse-clad hill behind the village.

The eldest of the Laytons had won the race, which somewhat allayed the irritation felt by his brothers. With a hot face and expanded nostrils the lucky youth (as he was regarded) strode towards the house, and loudly called for Master Nance. Here he caught sight of Damaris herself, who viewed these lusty youths with curious sensations, and called her to him with such freedom of manner that the girl ran into her own room, and thence escaping by the yard into the open, she betook herself straightway to her kine on the downs. There with her thoughts and maiden fancies she was ever passably content. And there, too, she stayed till evening, especially when she perceived that there was a quest for her.

From her vantage post she saw the boat at length return across the sound, with the unwelcome, forward young newcomers at the oars.

Both the kine and she herself were glad of it, for it was long past the common milking hour.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HEART OF A MAID.

MASTER NANCE was rarely pleased with the condescension of Master Layton. He had but half thought his suit (for so it was, in fact) would be considered at all. Knowing himself for what he was, he was not shrewd enough to

realise that he might yet seem to others more reputable than he really was. The unwonted thoughts of his own guilt had yet more lowered him in his own regard.

When the Layton lads appeared, therefore, and in a brawl told him—though in different keys and some with open sneers at the folly of the contest—how they had swum the sound of St. Agnes in honour of his daughter, he was as proud as a knight whose only child might be the queen of a tournament in which all the combatants were of extraordinary distinction.

"Where hies she? Where hies she?" persisted Eric Layton, the winner of the course. "I did but just see the sparkle of her eye, yet I feel my heart all aflame to become more intimate with her."

"Marry, thou fair son-that-shall-be," answered Nance, clapping the youth on the shoulder, "I give thee permit to go wheresoever thou wilt to find her. Nay, be not modest—"

At this the Layton lads laughed till the sheep browsing near ran from them in alarm. That ever they should be charged with such a weakness!

"No, faith, good father-that-may-be—I keep not a chamber within me for that most excellent virtue to dwell in. Such modesty as there is between us lies among those five varlets yonder."

"And right sensible thou art," continued Nance, though not without a feeling of discomfort at his position. "'Tis a world in which one were better to be bold than backward. And so I say to thee—seek her freely, and if thou art urged to crack the very panels of the door behind which she nestles in her maiden fear, I'll give thee absolution for it!"

"Hearty thanks, Master Nance," responded the lad, and, with a wink to his brothers, young Eric went off on his quest.

But this, as we have seen, was futile. Undeterred by Nurse Cochran, who hurled some strong abuse at him for his unmannerliness, he searched the house from roof to outbuildings. He even plunged his arms into a box of gold, as if he thought she might be there. And he took the bedding of fair Damaris' couch in his arms, and flung it loose into a corner, that she might not remain hid beneath it. This done, he gave the old woman a slap upon the cheek which roused all the bad blood in her, and told her that anon he would crop her tongue for her ere he took her with Damaris into his household.

"Thou dark cub!" cried the nurse at his heels. "Never while I have nails to tear thee from her shalt thou—coarse brute—mate with my white lily!"

But the youth jeered even while he climbed the downs, and took no heed of the angry looks of the other men and women of St. Agnes, who had gathered about the house to see what was in the wind.

"Fair doings, forsooth!" muttered the elder Pender. "There'll be no privilege in St. Agnes if deeds like these be borne with."

"The brawny whelp!" cried one of the women, half in admiration of his figure and half in hate.

But late in the evening young Layton rejoined his brothers, angry and tired. Though he had trodden in every part of the island (so he said), he had not found his bride. Vain was it for Nance to try to persuade him to tarry for the night. He was piqued, and talked loosely of surrendering the prize he had won. Yet at a word from his brothers, who had not spent their strength in idle quests, he was prompt to recant on this heading. For the present, however, he would return home. It was agreed that when due preparations were made for the wedding, Nance should fetch him, and then, without any more absurd prudery, Damaris should resign herself into his hands.

"Why, my wench, didst elude thy lover so?" asked Nance in the evening.

"I know not, father," she replied, "wherefore he is my lover. I like not him, and he misused my nurse, with scant care for her age."

"Her age! quo' she," interrupted Dame Cochran. "One need not be so old, child, to be nurse to thee. For all that, he's a bad youth, that Layton, and I marvel, Master Nance, thou canst talk of him and thy Damaris in one breath."

"I repeat it, Dame, notwithstanding; the girl has four days to bring her mind to it. See thou aid'st her, or it will be the worse for thee. I'll endure no opposition under my own thatch and beams."

"Oh, gramercy!" said the dame with an ironical curtesy. Then afterwards, Nance having left the two alone, "I'll see thee dead and buried, like yon shipload of men, Manuel Nance, ere I'll brook words like that from thy mouth. I tell thee, girl, thou shalt not be wife to this governor's chick."

"Of, that I am resolved, and so no more about it," observed Damaris, with a decision of tone and demeanour that surprised the old woman.

Each day of the following three Nance put to his daughter the same question:

"Wilt obey thy father, Damaris, in this matter?"

And each day she confessed herself unfilial, and likely to be. It hurt her to grieve her father, for there was much love of a kind between them, yet on this subject she had full assurance from her heart that she was a better judge than he.

Moreover, had she not each day obtained new strength to resist him from Nigel's stouter mind? They twain met on the downs as before, and sat hand in hand in the cave which had lately sheltered Sir Francis Seymour. Their love grew tenfold, until it was as if it had reached a degree beyond which a mortal body could not hold it.

At first, Nigel had made as if he cared not so greatly for her when she told him without comment of the bridegroom her father had brought for her. She was plaguing him. Of the distaste she felt for young Layton and of his obvious defects she said nought.

For this reason Nigel, though heavy at the heart as if lead lay there in barrels, said no word either in objection or abuse of his rival.

"Perchance," he said to himself, "she may be of a disposition to love this young gallant even as she has made a show of loving me. I will not bar her!"

Then, when she looked at him in wonder that he said nothing, and opened her pretty eyes wide upon him, he could no longer resist speaking after his own instincts.

"Damaris, my dear," he said, with a quaver in his voice, "you shall do as you like best to do. I will not bind you. We are both young and shall outgrow our troubles, if we have them. If you feel a fondness for Eric Layton, in the name of God and all His saints let me not stand between him and you—if you wish it not!"

But this was more than the girl could bear.

She cast herself upon Nigel's breast and put her arms about his neck.

"How vile thou art, my Nigel, to taunt me thus! Dost thou not see it in mine eyes that I was but trifling with thee? Thou alone art my life, and if I mate not thee I will die a maid—when God shall desire it."

After this, said in passionate tones, and with the girl's clear eyes looking rebukefully into his, there no longer abode any doubt in Nigel's mind.

He clasped Damaris to his heart, and covered her face with kisses.

Then it was too that he made the proposal which had lain near his soul ever since he had heard of this new suitor for his sweetheart.

"If it fell out, Damaris," he said slowly, fondling her hair while her cheek lay upon his shoulder, "if it fell out that no other way remained, wouldst thou confide in me, and depart from St. Agnes, and go whither Heaven would have us go?"

"I'll go with thee, my brave Nigel, to the land of the Turk, or to those uttermost parts of the earth, where the men are no higher than bodkins."

"Thanks, my sweet. Then trust me I will contrive a way."

With these words Nigel had brought back to the girl all the fortitude which her father's question had disturbed and routed.

And at each meeting they felt the surer that Heaven was upon their side, and that Eric

Layton and Damaris would never be housed together under one roof.

When he had nought more pressing to do, Nigel spent the hours in fresh caulking his little boat, and hammering leather cuts and sound wood patches upon the weaker parts of the framework. Also he cleansed and scoured it as it had never before been cleansed and scoured. And daily, while he was fishing, he had his eyes quite as much upon his boat as upon the water in which he dangled his line. He was earnest in bethinking how he could improve the thing, and make it more waterproof and worthy of the guest whom he hoped it might by-and-bye receive. Also, without exciting remark, he increased the stock of meal and fogs' flesh in his cottage. Ban, the idiot, likewise enjoyed himself in wringing the necks of sundry fowls, which were afterwards boiled into softness, and highly seasoned to make them keep long without decaying.

Damaris had less to sustain her.

It wounded her sore to bring the cloud upon her father's face morning and night, in response to his "Well, my daughter?" Latterly, she could not hold her tears. And on the evening before the fourth day, when she was to be made a bride against her will, at Master Nance's cold bidding of "good-night" she dropped upon her knees and laid hold of his wristband with the plaintive pleading:

"Oh, father! father!"



Sat hand in hand in the cave.



"I crave a favour of thee."

But he only cast a look at her to see if the old obduracy was in her lips and eyes, and left her with the laconic injunction:

"See thou art ready on the morrow!"

Had Dame Cochran also been against her, it would have gone hard indeed with the girl. But this lady prided herself upon the constancy of her hatreds and the strength of her memory. For all her unfeminine habits and appearance, she had a corner of tenderness in that withered old organ, her heart. And now she was as gentle towards Damaris as erstwhile she had been rough and unfeeling.

"Be hearty, my lamb," she murmured caressingly, as she unstrung the girl's gown from her back, perchance for the last time. "I have a notion it will not come to pass, though we be so near the threshold of it. 'Tis not for nought, beshrew me, that I have found a stripling chick in the two eggs I've cracked this last day of our lives. Marry, my wench, let's go to our beds in faith. How know we not that King Arthur himself shall not come in the night on his great white horse and carry thee off, Damaris, through the black night air to his fair castle and Court. I crave a favour of thee, my duck, if it comes about; make me thy tire-woman there, even as I have been thy waiting-woman here. For mine eyes have become used to the sight of my Damaris' fair face."

"Fond nurse, I will die ere I choose other than thou to wait upon me. But I need no servant, for I am on the brink of much misery."

Yet although she went to bed with these words on her lips and tears in her eyes, no sooner was she alone and in the dark, with her head upon the silken pillow, than the figure of Nigel came before her shut eyes to hearten her. And when she dreamt there was no element in her visions that she would have wished away.

(To be continued.)

THAT AWFUL COMPETITION!

Of course you know all about the Coupon Collecting Competitions. You read the full particulars of them in the *Christmas Week Number of SHORT STORIES*. You don't believe in this sort of thing. It is a lot of hard work with a very poor chance of success.

Well, it is fortunate for others that you do think so, because it gives them a better chance. But do you realise that working for about an hour a week—that is, fifty-two hours a year—you stand a good chance of earning

A Hundred Solid Sovereigns?

A lot can be done with £100, but, of course, if you are sufficiently wealthy to ignore the offer, pass along to something more exciting.

One of the coupons on the second page of *SHORT STORIES* will be collected by ordinary people, the other marked "newsagent," by tradesmen of that ilk. Similar coupons appear in *PEARSON'S WEEKLY* and *HOME NOTES*. Procure as many of these coupons as you possibly can, and paste them either in exercise books or on slips of paper.

£100 will be given to the reader who collects the greatest number from *SHORT STORIES* and *P.W.*; another £100 to the reader who collects from *HOME NOTES*; another £100 to the newsagent who collects from *S.S.* and *P.W.*; and another £100 to the newsagent who collects from *HOME NOTES*. There will also be numerous Consolation Prizes.

ONE PRIZE OF £25. FIVE EACH OF £5.
TWO EACH OF £10. TEN " " £2.

TEN EACH OF £1,

AND HUNDREDS OF SMALLER PRIZES.

Newsagents' coupons must not be collected by readers.

S.S. and *P.W.* coupons should be kept together: *HOME NOTES* Coupons should be collected separately.

NO COUPONS TO BE SENT IN BEFORE JANUARY, 1898.

PART THREE

OF

PEARSON'S SHAKESPEARE

Will be on sale on Thursday, February 18th. You will know it by the dainty appearance of its cover. The letters are printed in red on a pale salmon-pink surface, and the contents are as good as it is possible to make them—they consist of excellent printing and of reproductions of illustrations by Sir John Gilbert, R.A.

The volume will be complete in thirty parts, and it will be best for you to subscribe weekly rather than to wait until the whole is finished, as the number of bound volumes will be limited.

Part Three contains eighty pages of letterpress and nearly thirty illustrations, and the play treated is "Romeo and Juliet."

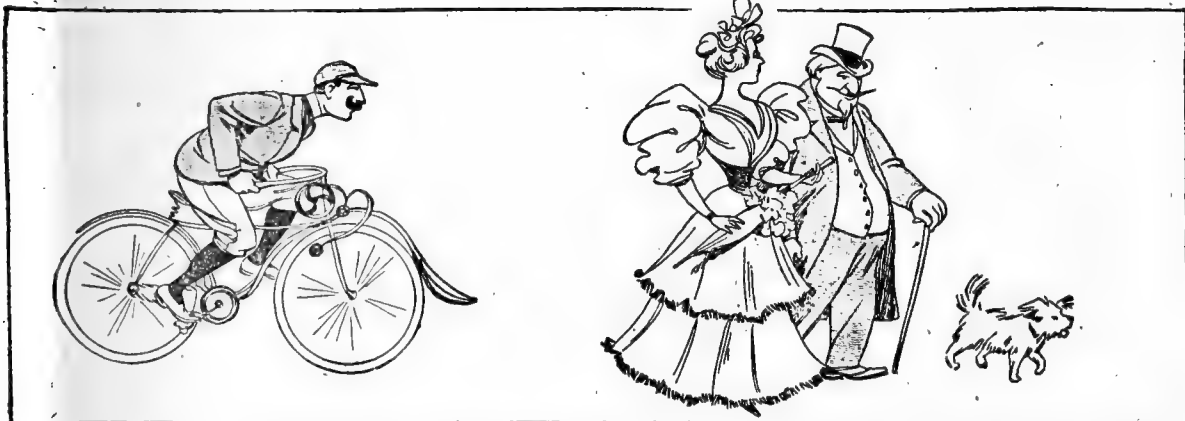
PEARSON'S SHAKESPEARE

should be ordered through a newsagent, or may be obtained from these offices, post free, for 7½d. per copy.

The winner of the "Small Handwriting Competition" is Mr. J. P. Nix, of 8, Rendezvous Street, Folkestone. He wrote the words *Short Stories* 2,297 times on the back of an ordinary Government oblong postal card, the title of the story being counted as once. A cheque for Two Guineas has therefore been sent to this gentleman.

A STORY WITHOUT WORDS.—No. 4.

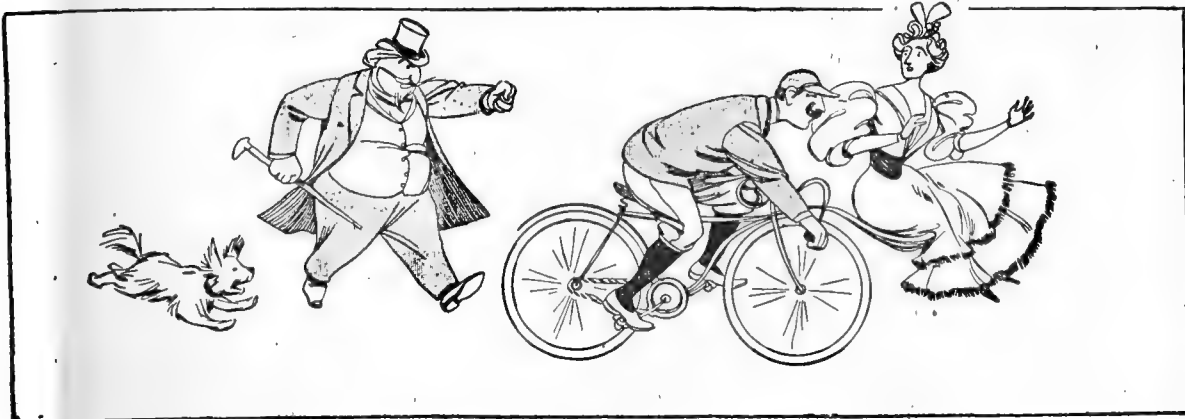
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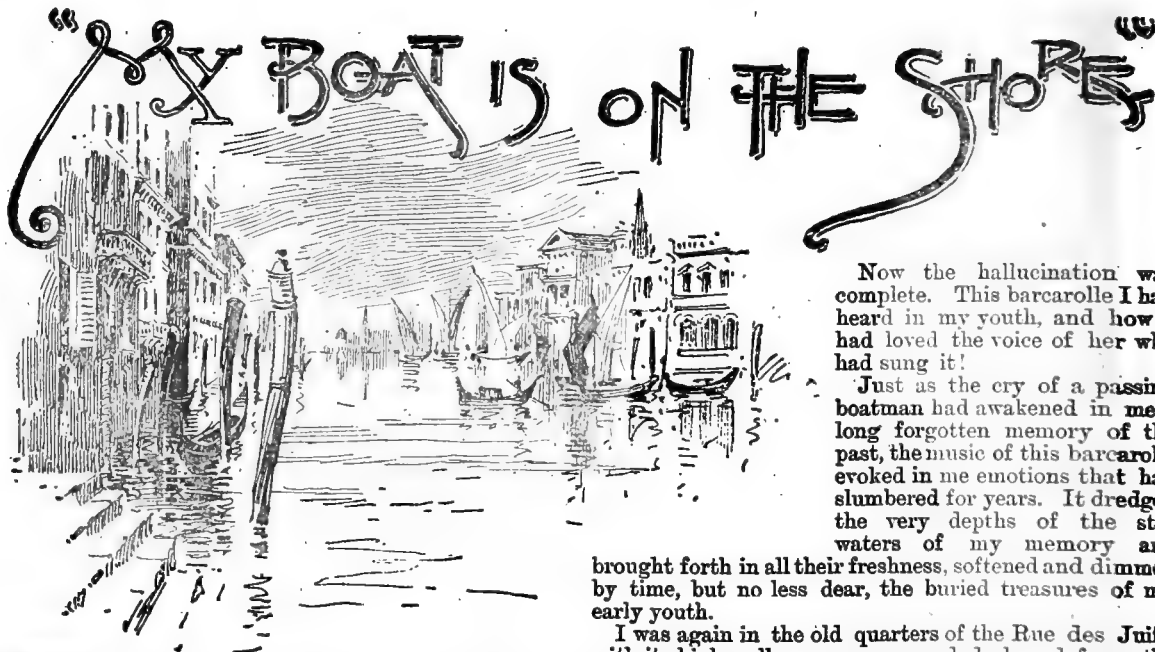
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3.



Now the hallucination was complete. This barcarolle I had heard in my youth, and how I had loved the voice of her who had sung it!

Just as the cry of a passing boatman had awakened in me a long forgotten memory of the past, the music of this barcarolle evoked in me emotions that had slumbered for years. It dredged the very depths of the still waters of my memory and

brought forth in all their freshness, softened and dimmed by time, but no less dear, the buried treasures of my early youth.

I was again in the old quarters of the Rue des Juifs, with its high walls moss-grown and darkened from the humidity of the canal, and as I looked at a certain high window blossoming with red carnations, there appeared the bewildering figure of Juliette Stadelli, who sang—

"My boat is on the shore."

This Juliette was the daughter of an expatriated Italian count, Daniele Stadelli, who, during the earlier years of his exile, had made occasional apparitions in his household, but finally had disappeared altogether.

At the time of which I speak Juliette, or Zulietta, as she was familiarly called, was scarcely twenty years of age; tall and lissom of figure, with an Italian vivacity she inherited from her father, dark eyes that glowed with a lustre like that of our wild cherries, and auburn locks that fell half caught, half free, about her neck. Two things alone marred the beauty of an otherwise faultless face; the chin was too massive and the distance too great between the upper lip and the finely modelled nose, which gave to the lower part of the face an expression a little *animale*, but when she smiled and showed her little white teeth, one freely forgave this slight detraction.

Notwithstanding this rare beauty, or perhaps on account of it, Zulietta was not well received in our rigid provincial society of Vilette. Her boyish manner and frank speech, her showy, eccentric toilettes, betraying her love of display, displeased the materfamilias, while her striking beauty excited the jealousy of the marriageable daughters who reproached her with being ill-bred and indiscreet. Nevertheless, on account of her wonderful musical talent and rich voice, she was welcomed at all our soirées.

We, the young men of the place, were all bewitched by her. When she sang, we formed an adoring circle round her; when she danced, we fought over her waltzes and contra-dances, and after the ball we loitered at the corners of the deserted streets to get a last glance from those sparkling eyes, as bright as the stars above her.

Zulietta received our enthusiastic homage indiscriminately, as one inhales the fragrance of a bouquet of roses.

IN one of her prefaces, Georges Sand tells how, when in Venice, upon overhearing a conversation between two women, the idea occurred to her of writing her romance "Audre." Their gossiping across from door to door reminded her so forcibly of La Chatre that she seemed suddenly to be transported from the spot out into the open country.

One morning in the same Venice I experienced an almost identical impression while leaning from my window and drinking in the fresh silence which is one of the charms of this enchanted city. The spot was propitious for dreaming. The water lapped caressingly against the moss-covered walls that rose from the lagoon; in front of me an old brick house, with high, arched windows and marble balconies, mirrored its blackened façade in the rippling waters below; the terraces blossomed bravely with bright geraniums, and through an occasional opening one caught glimpses of a narrow garden bordering the canal.

Farther down, the canal made a sharp turn, where, at long intervals, heralded by the cries of the gondoliers, gondolas would emerge from the shadow, glide through the dusky water it ruffled into a silvery wake, and disappear under a neighbouring bridge.

This drowsy little nook bore such a striking resemblance to one of the old quarters of my own native village that little by little a strange illusion took possession of me. The matin chimes sounding from the tower of a neighbouring church, added still another link to my retrospective vision. I seemed to have renewed my youth to five-and-twenty years and was drifting down our old canal of Vilette, between the tall, narrow houses of the Rue des Juifs, while the bells of the church of the Augustines rang out the hour of morning mass.

All at once, in the exquisite freshness of this suggestive silence, the voice of a woman floated out from a window hidden behind the railing of the terrace. The voice, limpid and young, hummed a barcarolle—a popular old Venetian air, beginning:

"My boat is on the shore."

without attaching more importance to one than to another. She allowed herself to be made the centre of our adoring circle without showing the least preference for any one of us. All of which, for my part, was most exasperating.

I loved Zulettia with all the ardour of my five-and-twenty years and with the candour of a man who feels his heart beat seriously for the first time. As everyone does who is passionately in love, I imagined Mademoiselle Stadelli to be the only woman whom I could ever love, and that without her my life would hold no purpose or charm. Her indifference and coquetry, therefore, caused me the most acute suffering.

I could not resign myself to the uncertainty of the relations existing between us, for I was not so calmly disposed as my comrades, and this doubt was more than I was able to endure. A plain situation, however desperate it might be, seemed preferable to the anxiety which I now felt, and in spite of my natural timidity I resolved upon the first occasion to make a frank avowal of my love.

This was not easy, for while the young girl invited us all cordially enough to her house, she adroitly avoided a tête-à-tête visit with anyone.

However, on one particular day I was before the others, and found her alone in the room which served her at once as studio and parlour.

I see it before me now, that large, light room on the top floor of the house in the Rue des Juifs. On the sill of the open window the bright geraniums waved and nodded gaily to the wanton breeze that fanned them, and from the canal below the music of the lapping water mounted on the air. The reflection of the sun upon the

Augustines mingled in a strange harmony with the murmur of the flowing water and the fantastic dance upon the wall.

As, with a beating heart, I closed the door behind me,



Leant her elbow on
the piano.

The bewildering
figure of Juliette
Stadelli.



water threw upon the wall fair, shadowy figures that floated in a fantastic dance across the room. It was Saturday afternoon, the bells chiming from the tower of

Zulettia, who was seated at the piano, slightly rose, then, perceiving that I was alone, advanced a step, still fingering the keys, and absently extended her other hand towards me.

"Oh, it is you, is it?" she murmured. "You are come at an unfortunate time. I am in the depths of one of my discontented moods. You cannot imagine how wearied I am of stagnating in this hole of Vilette!"

She struck a last petulant chord, then arose, threw back a truant curl with an old familiar gesture and leant her elbow on the piano. "Think," she continued, with evident irritation, "how one lives but once, and I am wasting this life so short and so precious buried at the bottom of this little provincial town."

"But you would not leave us?" I protested timidly.

"I would!" she cried, with flashing eyes and dilating nostrils. "I would go into the world and have a name and live according to my rank and have a mansion and pictures and jewels. To be a queen courted and admired in a circle of artists. Yes, I must have all that, and I am ready to give my soul to whoever will give it to me!"

This declaration held but little encouragement for me, who had nothing but my heart to offer her. I felt myself small and insignificant before this catalogue of ambitious desires. However, I ventured tenderly:

"All this pomp can never equal the joy of loving and of being loved, and if you knew, oh, Zulettia, if you only knew, how I love you!"

She regarded me a moment in amazement, then burst into a mocking laugh.

"You!" she cried. "Oh, my poor friend, my poor friend, you are mad! Let us talk no more about it," she added, and, turning quickly round, seated herself at the piano.

"Let us have a little music to dissipate your senti-

mental humour. I will sing you a barcarolle that I learnt when I lived in Venice with my father," and, without troubling herself further about my suit, began:

"My boat is on the shore."

Her rich contralto voice filled all the silent room. In the intervals of the couplets the sound of the lapping water rose plaintively, like a great sob. The cruel disdain of this proud girl cut me to the quick. Hot, passionate tears rushed from my eyes. I felt that I should weep ridiculously, but I would not have her witness the spectacle of my chagrin.

"Adieu, Zulieta," I managed to say. "Adieu," and fled precipitately, while she, without disturbing herself, continued her barcarolle.

In spite of my humiliation, I still loved Zulieta passionately, but I swore I would never see her again. Under these circumstances one often takes such oaths, but this time Heaven took it upon itself to see that I should not perjure myself.

A few weeks later we heard that Mademoiselle Stadelli was married. She had married an old man, but assuredly a rich one, and the bearer of an aristocratic name. Thus her ambitious dream was realised. Immediately after the nuptial ceremony she left Vilette, and all was over.

I strove a long time to recover myself after this blow. This marriage had turned my life into a nightmare. I lived upon the memory of my shattered hopes that were like the *débris* of seaweed and broken shells that the ebbing tide leaves upon the strand. I had breathed the bitter perfumes of love, and this tonic of bitterness fortified me against the return of my paroxysms of sentimentality. The following year I left Vilette for Paris. I knew that Zulieta was there with her husband, but I made no effort to see her. I had fought my passion inch by inch and feared a new fall at sight of her.

From time to time I heard others speak of her. She had become a gay woman of the world, and in the *Echo* I read occasionally of the brilliant receptions given by "the beautiful Mme. de R——"

There were rumours that the affairs of the household of Mme. de R—— did not run smoothly, and that the old husband complained bitterly of the carelessness and gaiety of the young wife.

The next year I heard that Juliette de R—— had abandoned the conjugal domicile, in company with an Italian artist, of whom she had become enamoured the preceding winter in Florence. This, of course, caused a great scandal, and for several months the select world in which she had lived commented upon this *esclandre*. I next heard that shortly after her arrival in Rome Zulieta had been neglected by her lover, and had gone upon the stage.

Then, as the gay world ceased to regale itself with accounts of absent ones, a silence settled about the affairs of Juliette de R——. Years passed, burying her adventures deeper and deeper beneath their oblivion. With myself also, time had done its work. The memory of Zulieta of Vilette was not dead, but profoundly sleeping, and it would never again have been awakened had it not been for the enchantment of Venice that recalled it after a lapse of twenty years.

This Venetian barcarolle, that I had not heard since my youth, wrought in me a magic resurrection like that of the coming of the Prince to the Palace of the Sleeping Beauty of the Wood. Again, the dusky charms of Zulieta surged across me in all the freshness of those old Vilette days. It seemed to me I must see her appear

among the red geraniums on the balcony before me, with her glowing eyes and careless smile. She haunted me all that day as I wandered through that enchanted city.

She followed me over the threshold of the old palaces of the Grand Canal and along the lagoon, where the soft shadows were lightened by the slanting rays of the departing sun. The slender, swift gondolas gliding over the tranquil water seemed to carry, under the black cowl of the *felze*, the phantoms of my dead youth. When one after another they stopped at the steps of the Lido, I almost expected to see, emerging from the low cabin, the supple grace and proud beauty of Zulieta.

Through the sumptuous halls of the Doges' Palaces, among the mausolia of San Giovanni and San Paolo, under the arcades blossoming with lilacs of San Lazzaro, this obsession pursued me.

In the evening, after having dined alone in the gay little restaurant of *Capello Nero*, I went in search of my good Francesco, the gondolier, and told him to take me slowly to the Rialto. As in the barcarolle of Zulieta, the water of the Grand Canal was black as jet, the sky was enamelled with stars, and in the distance, under the first white beams of the rising moon, the islets seemed floating in a silver mist.

Many of the palaces were brilliantly lighted, but those along the bank were enveloped in shadow and stood out against the starry sky a confused mass of black roofs. In this imposing mystery of dusky water and sleeping palaces, the gondolas glided to and fro in ghost-like silence, only the prow and saw-teeth could be distinguished, and the little twinkling lantern swinging from the roof. All this shadowy picture, peopled by dim spectres fleeting and uncertain, aided still more to plunge me into the strange world of delusion.

In front of the old Gustiniani palace, now occupied by the Hotel de l'Europe, a good half of the canal was encumbered by an assemblage of gondolas grouped round a long barque full of serenaders. I commanded Francesco to approach as near as possible to the musicians, whose barque was gaily illuminated with different hued lanterns, which the rippling of the water caused to balance and nod merrily to each other.

The figures of the performers were confused and indistinct under the yellow flare of the lanterns, but I had no difficulty in distinguishing a great fellow in a slouch hat, with cloak draped loosely about his shoulders, who stood in the prow of the boat with a theatrical pose. As I drew near they were singing a popular Neapolitan air, with an accompaniment of violins, guitars and mandolines; then, during the pause that followed the close of the song, one of the musicians, leaping from gondola to gondola, made a collection of small coins, which he brought in his hat to the big fellow in the cloak.

This latter deigned to receive it, and turned and spoke to one of the singers sitting beside him, whom I had not noticed before.

She arose, and after indicating her selection to the orchestra, began the serenade from *Don Pasquale*. The voice of this woman lacked volume and power, but it was so caressingly tender and pure, and managed with such consummate art, that from the first notes I was affected by it. Although at times the woman seemed rather to sigh than to sing, the articulation was so clear that not one word, even at my distance, was lost.

I caught the lowest notes and they carried me away with their sweet clearness, and touched a responsive

chord in my nature that had not vibrated for years. Here was another inexplicable emotion! I sought to explain it by the nervous state in which I had been since morning, and by the influence of my unusual and mysterious surroundings, all of which had worked upon my imagination; nevertheless, I was still troubled, and felt drawn by an irresistible impulse to see the singer a little nearer.

When the song was finished, the singer was rapturously applauded, and someone called for a selection from *Trovatore*. The man in the cloak raised his hat in sign of acquiescence, but the woman shook her head, fearing probably that her voice was not powerful enough for such dramatic music; still her companion insisted upon raising the tone. One could see by his imperious manner that he spoke to the woman more as a master than impresario.

At last she obeyed, but chose another selection, and the orchestra played the opening measures of a *Miserere*. The poor soul had reason to doubt the violence of Verdi's music; the impassioned plaints of Leonora surpassed the range of her frail voice, and she was obliged to protest. The impresario, on the other hand, shrilled out in a staccato tone, "*Addio, Leonora!*" scoring a success for himself at the expense of his companion, and at the next pause proceeded himself to make the collection, which this time was abundant!

By this time some of the gondolas had moved away and I profited by it to have Francesco move nearer. He manoeuvred so well that I found myself side by side with the orchestra! Upon a closer view, I experienced a sad disappointment.

At a distance the singing barque, with its gaily coloured lanterns, had harmonised appropriately with the fantasy of the Venetian night, but at a nearer approach the scene lost much of its poetry. The singers were common in face and figure, and passed round from hand to hand a flask of *Chianti*, which they gulped down with coarse pleasantries.

I searched the faces of the company eagerly to find the artiste who had sung the serenade from *Don Pasquale*, and suddenly I received a shock in good earnest.

In spite of her age—she seemed to have passed forty—and in spite of the drawn features and sallow complexion, which still retained the melancholy traces of beauty, she bore a strange resemblance to Juliette Stadelli. There were the same loose locks of hair waving over a high forehead, the same glowing eyes, the same massive lower part of the face, which the carious mouth still brightened occasionally by a weary smile.

The sloping shoulders and graceful head were carried as proudly as in the old days, and the small hands were moulded as delicately as those I had raved over and longed to cover with kisses.

Was all this merely a trick of my imagination, too prompt to take its chimeras for a certainty, or had I really before me the proud, disdainful beauty, Juliette Stadelli, whom I had found so lovable and so cruel?

The singer was certainly of the same age as she whom all Paris had at one time called the beautiful Mme. de R—; but the puffy eyelids, the heavy mouth with its sunken corners, the shabby, threadbare appearance of her dress, all told of years of misery and debauch.

Could it be that in the course of a few years the proud young beauty, the admired of all Vilette, the queen of Paris, had sunk to the level of a strolling singer?

I assured myself again and again that I was simply the dupe of a fortuitous resemblance; still, my eyes could not detach themselves from the face of this woman. As

the rise and fall of the water brought us occasionally on a level with each other, she divined that she was the object of my persistent attention, and our glances met.



Left standing alone outside the door.

At that moment, the movement of the gondolas brought me closer to her, and I could not resist the opportunity to satisfy myself.

"Juliette!" I whispered; "Juliette Stadelli!"

She started at my voice and fixed her black eyes upon me. A frown contracted her features. She crisped her lips together dolorously and there seemed to be a conflict between her humiliated pride and her excited curiosity. She raised her eyebrows questioningly and I fancied I saw a gleam of recognition, softened by regret.

"I am one of your old friends of Vilette," I added, but just then the man with the cloak came back with his hat full of copper coins. The face of the woman expressed the greatest apprehension. She shook her head negatively, and quickly applied her finger to her lips to impose silence. All this had taken scarcely more than a second.

As soon as the impresario had assumed his theatrical pose, I saw his companion lean towards the musicians, who began to tune their instruments, then, rising and standing under the soft light of the lanterns, she began:

"My boat is on the shore."

Her clear, pure voice rose in the silence of the night like a melancholy echo of the past, and after each couplet the musicians repeated the chorus.

The choice of this barcarolle dissipated my last doubt. It was the voice that had charmed my youth, the voice that had shattered the dreams of my first love. I saw again that familiar room in the Rue des Juifs; in the interval of the couplets I heard, as on that former occasion, the plaintive sobbing of the water of the canal, and again my eyes filled with tears and I could have wept like a child.

The song had ceased, but I remained bewildered, lost in the memories of my early life. One after another the gondolas surrounding mine had moved off and disappeared. At last the musicians, too, put away their instruments and set their barque in motion; as it grazed mine I raised my eyes and met those of the singer; she leant towards me and said in French: "Adieu, and good-night."

The tone in which she spoke this wish surprised me, and I gave a sign to Francesco to follow the musicians.

In a few moments they stopped at the Vallarossa and slowly prepared to ascend the steps, after snuffing out

their lanterns. I kept within sight of them, and at the end of the long, narrow street the group dispersed.

Three or four of the company, among them the impresario in his cloak, stopped at the threshold of a *trattoria*, evidently deliberating about entering to discuss a *bicchiero di Cipro*. The others, carrying their instruments wrapped in green lustrine, disappeared at the end of the street after having said good-night to the singer. The latter was left standing alone outside the door awaiting the pleasure of her lord and master.

I sought a last opportunity to speak to her, but as I approached, the impresario appeared at the door, and in a loud, imperious voice, cried: "Zulietta! come in." She drew herself up with a slight shudder and silently followed the man with whom she had chosen to cast her lot.

With my heart wrung with compassion, I followed their retreating forms, my lost youth vanishing with them.

And with a feeling of utter loneliness, I regained the Rue San Mose, where the electric lights flared with a brutal clearness on the swarming throng of promenaders.

ANDRÉ THEURIET.

What did the Other Fellow Say?

THE following monologue is supposed to take place at one end of a telephone. What did the other fellow say?

Two guineas is offered for the best set of sentences which constituted the other man's part of the conversation. All attempts to reach *Short Stories* offices by Monday, February 22nd. All envelopes to be marked, "Telephone Talk":

Bur-r-r-r-r.

Are you there? Number 46,532, please. Hurry up.

Bur-r-r-r-r.

Ah! That you, Charlie?

Jack.

First-rate, thanks.

No; really?

Oh, I say, you had it pretty hot, old man, didn't you?

Eh! what?

By Jove! I'm glad it wasn't me. Tell me all about it; go on.

No, I didn't; I got home fairly early.

Poor beggar, I pity you; go on.

Good gracious! You don't say so!

What in the world did you say? I hope to goodness you—

Great Scott! whatever shall I do. She'll, she'll—

Hang you! What a fool you are.

No, no, no; not yet.

Yes.

Well, you are—

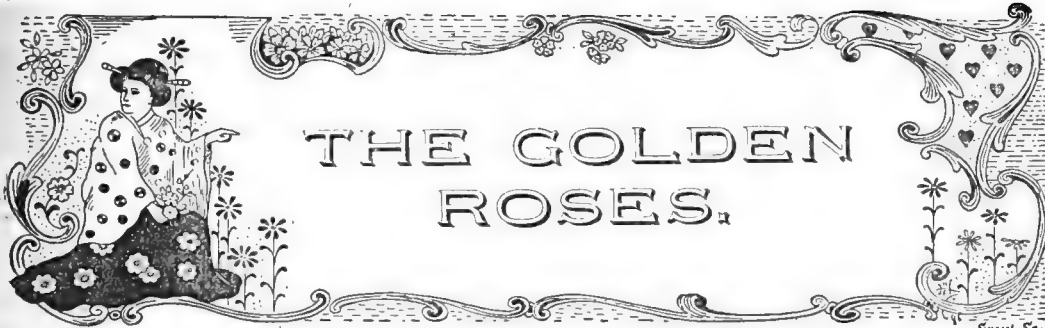
You did.

But I say you did.

Oh, be quiet.

I do, and I never want to hear of you again.

Oh, you— Bur-r-r-r-r.



A GLOWING southern sun bathed the drowsy old garden in a flood of molten gold. The milky pucca blossoms mingled their beauty with that of the haunting scarlet of the cactus. The orange and fig trees hung their luscious fruit within tempting distance, while over the thick white adobe wall, across the trellis before the house and up to the Señorita's bedroom window, climbed, in a riot of yellow splendour, the superb Gold of Ophir rose tree, famous along the entire coast.

Never was there such another rose tree! Its limbs were as thick as a man's arm, and its blossoms were great, glorious nests of colour and perfume. It bloomed the entire year—bloomed for offerings before Our Lady's Shrine in the old Mission; bloomed for weddings and funerals; for the tourist who paused at the Señorita's gate to wonder and exclaim at the marvel; and for the Señorita herself.

The Señorita was straight and tall and slender. Though the grey was beginning to creep in her dusky hair, and the tell-tale wrinkles were seaming her forehead, she yet was a handsome woman, with the same Andalusian features; the soft, speaking eyes; the clear, olive skin her beautiful mother had brought from Spain years ago.

In the tiny low-ceilinged drawing-room, immaculate as a sanctuary, with its snowy matting, its wooden blinds, its sanded thresholds, among the images of the martyrs and the pictures of the blessed saints, hung a portrait of the Señorita, painted when she was eighteen. She wore, as became her station, a silken gown and a string of pearls about her throat. Over the superbly moulded shoulders a bertha of rare lace was thrown, and in her hand she held a Gold of Ophir rose—the first one ever plucked from the bush before her door.

Every afternoon when the Señorita had finished her household duties, before she sat down to the dainty drawn work which was a part of her daily occupation, and from which she derived a modest income, it was her custom to enter the drawing-room, and, after adjusting the blinds so that the sunlight would touch the portrait gently, to stand before it intently regarding her own lost youth.

"Mother of God!" was the murmured exclamation, "but it was a long time ago—long—time—ago."

There was always a vase of golden roses on a little stand before the portrait. When the Señorita's gaze left the picture it fell upon the flowers. With a gentle sigh, she would pensively touch the petals with caressing fingers, then silently and like a ghost slowly glide from the room.

This was the little shrine at which the Señorita

worshipped, loved, and remembered. Every day were these unostentatious ceremonies repeated. Every day her gentle voice murmured: "Mother of God! but it was a long time ago—long—time—ago."

Years before, when the Señorita had been young—a beauty and the belle of the little Spanish-American settlement—up at the Presidio there had been a gallant young lieutenant who fell desperately in love with the charming Spaniard. Their courtship, amid the myrtle and orange groves, under the warm moonlight of the Southern region, in the sheltered nooks along the white beach, had been ideal. Both young, ardent, and madly in love, their affection became a bit of local pride. "May you love as Ygnacia," was the blessing mothers whispered to their daughters, and "May the saints send you another lieutenant!" brought the blood into the cheeks of the Señorita's girl companions.

Once when the lieutenant returned from Santa Barbaram, whither he had been sent on important military business, he brought to his sweetheart a tiny rose-bush, which he planted before her door.

"Ygnacia," he whispered as he caught her slim hands in his and bent his bold, blue eyes upon her blushing face, "my love for you will be perennial, like this bush, and sweet as its blossoms."

But alas for the pledges of passion! The lieutenant was one to love and ride away. Ere the roses had bloomed the third year, he had departed with fervent vows and promises of a speedy return. But the long, burning summers, the slow, dreary winters, drifted by and he never came. The tiny bush grew to be a lordly tree and never did the Señorita cut a rose for the Mission, the bride, or for the dead, that she did not see the handsome face, those bold, tender eyes, and hear again those passionate words: "My love will be perennial, like this bush, and sweet as its blossoms."

She heard of him now and then—the famous Indian fighter, then the major, the colonel, at last the great general, whose name was honoured throughout the land. Then came the news of his marriage to a celebrated heiress.

The rose tree was growing and blooming, but hope was dead in the heart of the Señorita.

Year after year she lived her simple little life in the old cottage abode of her ancestors. One by one her friends passed away. To the Señorita were left only her rose garden and memory. The Gold of Ophir rose tree climbed to her window, and thrust its great yellow blossoms into her room. Each perfect flower seemed to challenge her attention, and to cry: "Look at me. Ygnacia. I am sweet as was his love for you." And

the Señorita, growing older and plainer every day, kissed the rose and murmured: "Mother of God! but it was a long-time—ago."

It was a great day for the sleepy little Spanish town when the railway came; greater, when the rich syndicate built the magnificent hotel. Then came the electric cars, rushing and clanging before the Señorita's rose garden. Inquisitive tourists poked their noses over her wall and, seeing her wonderful rose tree, begged to be allowed to enter. The Señorita received these visitors with sweet serenity and gracious hospitality. No one went away empty handed. The golden roses were bestowed with prodigality upon any who begged the gift.

Our Lady's Shrine was always decorated with the great blossoms, and ever before the portrait of the Señorita in the tiny drawing-room stood her offerings to her own lost youth.

One evening the Señorita sat under the Gold of Ophir rose tree. In her hand she held a cluster of her favourites. As she inhaled their fragrance her thoughts were as ever busy with the past. Again she saw her lover, straight, manly and tender, standing before her, heard his whispered vows, and felt his kisses on her cheeks and lips.

The garden gate clicked and swung open. Two people advanced slowly and uncertainly through the gathering dusk; a man and a young woman, fashionably dressed, with an unmistakable air of good breeding. The man, stepping forward and courteously lifting his hat, said: "Have I the honour of addressing Señorita Ygnacia Bonaventura?"

He stopped abruptly as a sharp cry broke from the Señorita's lips. She had risen, with her customary courtesy, at the first words of the stranger, and stood now clinging desperately to the trellis, over which the rose tree climbed.

"Santa Maria!" she breathed rather than spoke, "who it ees?"

"I am sorry to have startled you so," replied her visitor gently, "we were told at the hotel that you were quite willing strangers should see this beautiful rose tree or we would not have intruded. I beg your pardon," and he turned as if to go.

"Stay, Señor," she cried, "do not go. I will show you the roses with happiness. But your face it ees which gave me so moocho start. *Jesu Christo!* but you are like someone—"

"Maybe you knew my father," said the stranger. "He was stationed here at the Presudio, years ago, and I have often heard him speak of this charming town."

"Your fathaire here?"

"Yes, my father, General Saunders; Lieutenant Saunders when he was here."

There was profound silence. The straight, slim figure seemed turned to stone. The great dark eyes looked out from under the folds of the black tapelo with sad intensity and earnest scrutiny. Tom Saunders felt as if he were confronted by some vague, unknown tragedy. His young wife, too, was experiencing a sensation as if she were looking on at a mysterious phase of human emotion, and, drawing near her husband, clasped his arm with both her hands, and turned her sweet face, full of tender sympathy, towards the Señorita. For an instant they stood thus, three souls looking out of their windows to scan each other with searching looks. The Señorita spoke first: "Si, señor," she said in a low, grave voice, "I did know your fathaire long-time—ago. He look like you—ah, I 'ope ees well—si?"

"Did you not know?—but of course you would not

have heard," said Saunders sadly; "my father is dead. He died a month ago."

"He ees dead?" repeated the Señorita mechanically.

"Yes," said Saunders, "and before he died he charged me with a sacred commission. He knew that I was coming here on my wedding journey. He called me to him one day and said: 'When you get there I want you to hunt up Señorita Ygnacia Bonaventura. Tell her for me that now, as I am nearing death, I see with clearer vision, and that I regret the past. Tell her that as I lie here racked with pain, I long, oh! I long for the coolness and quiet of her rose garden, and that in the long watches of each restless night I smell again the perfume from the golden rose I planted before her door.'"

There was a sound of sobbing, as Saunders finished his pathetic message. It came from his wife, who was profoundly affected by the situation. But the Señorita did not weep. Her white face was tense in its agony, but not a tear glistened in her sombre eyes. She held out her hand to the son of her old love. He took it in both his and pressed it gently. "She has suffered for my father's sake," was the thought that flashed through his mind, and he bent his head and laid a reverent kiss upon the Señorita's brown, toil-worn hand.

As Saunders and his wife were leaving, their arms filled with branches and clusters of the Gold of Ophir roses, the Señorita held open the gate for them. When Saunders passed her, she laid in his hand the king of all that year's blossoms, a great, royal golden rose. "For the lieutenant's grave," she simply said.

Saunders bowed, too much moved to speak. And six weeks later the remains of that perfect flower were reverently strewn over a grave in Greenwood.

Hours after their departure, the Señorita entered the little drawing-room. Her face was wan and haggard and old. She lifted her flickering candle high before the portrait and gazed steadfastly upon the beautiful young face that smiled down at her.

"Mother of God!" she breathed, "but it was a long-time—ago."

The next morning they tried in vain to waken the Señorita. She lay still and cold on her bed, drawn close to the open casement. Through the window, the great, gay golden roses climbed and looked into the poor little chamber. And one, bolder than the rest, had laid its yellow head close to the dead heart of the Señorita.

EDITH SESSIONS TUPPER.

A STORY WITHOUT WORDS.

£10 in Prizes.

On page 245 three sketches are given in their proper order. £5 is offered to the reader who sends us the most appropriate wording to go under each sketch, the whole to form a story descriptive of the illustrations, and £1 will be given to each of the senders of the next best five attempts.

It is not necessary for competitors to have any literary ability. If you have a good idea, surely there should be no difficulty in putting it down in words. The whole of the story is limited to one hundred words, which may be distributed under the sketches according to the judgment of the competitor.

All that you have to do is to write in the order of the sketches the wording that you think most appropriate, enclose your attempt in an envelope (which should be marked "Picture Story"), and forward it to this office before Monday, February 22nd



THE LONG-EXPECTED BURGLAR.

EZRA TIMMINS was a steady man of forty, who had been fifteen years book-keeper for

the prosperous grocery house of Ham, Bacon, Lard and Co. He had lived ten years with his wife in the same house in Eddy Street, and had saved money, for his habits were frugal, his pleasures simple, his pains few. His pleasures consisted of an occasional game of whist, at which Mrs. Timmins was always his partner, for the reason that he would not allow anyone else to scold her when she revoked, though he did not mind scolding her himself.

His pains were an unreasoning terror of burglars, and a dire apprehension that his niece and ward, pretty Constance Timmins—who was the only young person in his house—would end one of her many flirtations by throwing herself away on some worthless scamp.

To guard against burglars, he cultivated an acquaintance with a policeman who alternated on the beat, and dropped mysterious hints of munificent rewards in case they caught a burglar in the act. He had a burglar-alarm in his bedroom, and a fowling-piece, from which Mrs. Timmins was in the habit of withdrawing the cartridges for fear he should shoot himself. Many a sleepless night he spent in prowling about the house in the dark in quest of some intruder whose footstep he thought he heard. He read some article in the newspapers about burglaries, and surprised his wife and niece by the extent and accuracy of his information touching the methods of the fraternity. He plunged them into depths of despair by declaring that he knew it was his destiny to wake up some morning and find the house robbed and Constance murdered.

Constance was a lovely girl, the daughter of an elder brother of Timmins, who had gone to Jamaica, bought a plantation, taken the yellow fever, and died, leaving an estate, of which the value was unknown. She was a coquette, and had a host of admirers, who seldom commanded the approval of her uncle or aunt. If they were young, Uncle Ezra said they were snips, and ought to be in the nursery; if they were old, he said they should be in some Old People's Home. Constance laughed at his invectives, and when her uncle forbade this or that man the house, she met him elsewhere, if he had taken her fancy.

Among the few admirers who could not fairly be condemned to the nursery was Colonel Pitblado. He had met

Constance at a small party, and he had been struck by her beauty and vivacity. With his usual circumspection, he had instituted inquiries respecting her prospective fortune; from the assiduity with which he pursued her afterwards, it may be inferred that the result of the investigation had been satisfactory.

Much to his annoyance, Constance not only did not ask him to the house, but begged as a favour that he would not come, at any rate not for the present.

"You see, Colonel Pitblado," said she, "I have rather taken a fancy to you, and I don't want to lose you. Now, my uncle, who is the best man in the world, invariably takes a dislike to people who pay me attentions. I have a presentiment that if you came to the house he would quarrel with you, and that would be the end of our acquaintance."

The Colonel argued, but it was of no avail. The only concession which Constance would make was that now and then, say once a week, she would leave the door open after her uncle had gone to bed, and the Colonel might slip in and spend a few minutes with her in the dark in the hall or in the drawing-room.

"I know," she said, "that you are too much of a gentleman to make me regret my good nature; anyway, I think I can take care of myself."

The Colonel's behaviour was beautiful; his speech was eloquent on the subject of his love, but he rarely ventured even to press the fingers of his charmer as they sat side by side on the sofa.

There they sat one night, and Constance, in a subdued voice, was explaining her uncle's extraordinary terror of burglars.

"Has he ever been robbed?" asked the Colonel.

"I believe that when he was a child, burglars broke into the house where he was living, and killed one of the inmates. He was awakened by the sound of the shot, and he has never got over the shock."

"I can quite understand it," replied the Colonel. "There is something peculiarly terrifying in a midnight encounter with a man whom you cannot see, and who has everything to gain and little to lose by taking your life."

"Oh!" cried Constance, "the thought fills me at times with such horror, that I am as afraid of burglars as my uncle. I think that if I saw one in my room, I should die of fright."

"I hope," said the Colonel, laughing, "that I should

not show the white feather. But I must say that I do not hanker to meet a burglar in the flesh."

At that moment a slight noise was heard outside the drawing-room door. It was the faintest possible creak of a weak flooring-plank under a tread. Both the tenants of the sofa looked up and held their breath with ears on the full strain. Another board creaked, and presently, after a wait which seemed to last for ages, the acute ears of the Colonel detected a muffled tread on the carpet of the room in which they sat. There was a third party in the room. He was shod with wool and was moving noiselessly, and occasionally stopping as if to listen whether he was detected. The long expected burglar had come.

Constance fainted silently on the sofa. The Colonel, in whom the presence of danger had awakened his fighting instinct, rose from his seat and groped his way noiselessly towards the intruder, whom he could not see. He could, by this time, hear the scoundrel's breath coming and going, and instinct prompted him to hold his own. He would have given worlds for a weapon, but his stick was out of reach. He must give battle with his bare hands against one who probably had both pistol and knife. As he reflected, the intruder's foot came in contact with a stool. The Colonel hesitated no longer, with a sudden spring, he was upon the invader. He had thrown his weight into the spring, and felled the burglar to the ground, face downward. Then swiftly seizing his wrists, he held them in a grip of iron, twisted the arms upwards, and sat down on his back.

The burglar struggled, evidently striving to free one hand to use his knife; but the Colonel was now fighting for his life, his clutch of the wrists did not relax. When the struggle grew weaker, and Pitblado got back his breath, he hissed:

"You villain! If you don't keep your hands still, I'll drive my knife through your vitals. One motion, and you are a dead man."

The burglar made no reply. He panted, and sounds came from him which, to Pitblado's ear, sounded strangely like a sob. The Colonel derived a qualified satisfaction from his stillness.

If he had dared to loose his clutch of the fellow's wrists, he would have tried to throttle him; but the danger of a stab in the side, if he moved his hands to the burglar's throat, was too obvious. He thought of shouting for help. But that would have betrayed his presence in Constance's drawing-room after the lights were out, and her uncle was in bed. He would rather risk the knife than compromise her. He supposed that she had flown upstairs, whereas, in fact, she was in a dead faint on the sofa.

What was he to do? Was he to stay sitting on that burglar all night?

While he ransacked his brains for an expedient, a deep groan came from the man under him. The burglar gasped, and, at last, muttered:

"If you'll let me get up I'll show you——"

"Yes, I dare say," said Pitblado; "you'll show us lots of things. That cock won't fight. It's that I am going to show you the door of the other world."

The Colonel could feel a quiver go through the frame on which he sat. The burglar went on:

"I'll show you——"

"Haven't I told you that I am going to do all the showing?"

"If you'll only lift your weight off my lungs, so I can breathe——" said the burglar.

"You'd make use of your breath to drive a knife into

me, wouldn't you? Not much. I'm just thinking how I shall kill you so as not to ruin the carpet——"

"Oh! oh! oh!" came from the prostrate body.

"What an unreasonable fellow you are," said the Colonel: "here I've let you live for ever so many minutes while I have been studying how to put you to death."

"Spare my life!" gurgled the burglar.

"Why should I?"

"I'll—I'll show you where the silver is."

"You'll show me," repeated the Colonel, puzzled.

"I will. I give you my honour I will."

"Oh, I see," said Pitblado: "you want to divide. It won't do."

"What more do you want?"

"I don't intend," said the Colonel, "that you shall have a single spoon."

"Take them all, take them all. Only let me keep Connie's christening cup."

"By George!" muttered Pitblado, "you're a romantic sort of chap to be a burglar."

It had by this time become manifest to the Colonel that the situation could not be prolonged for ever. He could not sit on the burglar's back till morning—the tension of the muscles of his arms was weakening. He must, somehow, get him to the nearest police-station. If he only had a ray of light!

At that moment a faint groan came from the sofa.

"Good Heavens!" muttered the Colonel: "he's got an accomplice."

Another sound from the sofa, and Pitblado saw that time was up. The new-comer might at any moment rush to the rescue of his accomplice. Pitblado had noticed a poker and shovel in front of the drawing-room grate. With a sudden spring he regained his feet, let the burglar go, leaped to the grate, and seized the poker.

A wild shriek came from the sofa, and simultaneously the Colonel struck a match. By its flare he saw, to his amazement, Connie sitting upon the sofa, and the burglar lying motionless on the floor. Had he killed the scoundrel?

Another match lit the gas, and Connie sprang to the burglar, took his head in her arms, and screamed to Pitblado:

"You have killed my uncle!"

"Your uncle? Why, that's the burglar."

"It's my uncle, and you have choked him to death. He's insensible. Oh, help me to bring him to."

The prostrate man revived, and, seeing Connie, muttered:

"Let him take all the silver, Connie, except your christening-cup. If he'll spare our lives, we'll not prosecute."

It did not take long to get Mr. Timmins on the sofa, and, as he was not hurt, a glass of wine, administered by the tender hands of Connie, restored him to his senses. His mind was still confused. He murmured:

"I have had a narrow escape, my poor Constance. I seemed to hear a noise in this room, and stepped in, when a man of gigantic strength leapt upon me, and was about to kill me, when you must have appeared and frightened him away."

"That is not quite exact, dear uncle. While you were struggling in the most heroic way with the burglar, Colonel Pitblado happened to pass, entered the house by the front door, which the burglar had left open, drove the fellow away and rescued you. Allow me to introduce you—Mr. Timmins, Colonel Pitblado."

G. P. HARROW.

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NOTICE.—The £120 is offered to purchasers of the puzzle until the end of February, 1897, and orders from those taking part in the contest should be sent in as early as possible, but not later than Saturday, February 27th, 1897, when the awards will be made, the prizes dispatched, and the result communicated to all competitors by Monday, March 1st, 1897.

If you cannot solve all the puzzle words, do as many as you can, as the prizes will be awarded in order of correctness, and in cases of equality will be added together and divided; thus a prize is insured to every person sending in all eight solutions correct.

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Answers to - - Correspondents.

READERS of *Short Stories* will this week observe that we have commenced an Answers to Correspondents page. So many inquiries are made from time to time on all subjects, the replies to a large number of which are quite interesting, that we fancy the enjoyment obtained by readers from perusing this feature will justify the crowding out of a page of short story. *Pearson's Weekly* contains a column devoted to reviews of new discoveries and strange inventions. It is not possible to institute such a feature in *Short Stories*, but if readers are the originators of any invention which they may care to put before the public free of charge, let them send it along, and, if it is of sufficient general interest, a notice of it will appear on this page.

MEPHISTOPHELES.—A lifeboat costs twenty-seven shillings a week to maintain.

MAGGIE.—You are on the wrong track. Queen Victoria seldom, if ever, goes shopping. It is probably the Queen of Italy whom you have in mind. When she enters a shop, the doors are immediately closed, and the public excluded until she has left.

ANNOTED suffers from soreness after shaving.——Try the effect of a preparation formed by mixing glycerine and bay-rum in equal parts. Apply it immediately after your morning scrape.

K. L. AND OTHERS.—Farmer Hayseed's idea was: "I think I'll have a drink."

J. K.—Some time ago there was a great deal of talk about the possibilities of artificially creating rain storms, but the experiments do not appear to have been commercially successful. You can raise a storm yourself by telling your better-half that she will have to get along on one bonnet a year.

H. T.—Here is an idea for you, then: "Lunch Ready. You don't have to wait. We pay men to do that." I hope your restaurant will be a success.

L. S. T. (NEWPORT, MON.)—It is no uncommon thing for one species of bird to imitate the song of another, when they have the opportunity of developing their powers of imitation. The shrikes, for example, enjoy a remarkably retentive memory, and are able to reproduce the sounds emitted by other birds whose nests are near their own, although, on account of the frequency with which they interpolate the copied song with their own notes, their identity may be easily discovered.

E. G. Z.—It is no uncommon thing for second cousins to marry.

M. S. T.—Delighted to hear that "THE WRECKERS OF SCILLY" is so much appreciated in your part of the world. It really is a very excellent story, and well worth following up.

H. G.—There are 2,000,000 trade unionists in the United Kingdom.

K. L. T.—The biggest system of the kind in existence is the distribution of water power in London.

JESSIE wishes to induce me to start a campaign against match-making mammas. She appears to be of an independent spirit, and most strongly objects to the idea of a mother putting her daughters on show, as it were, like so many cattle, offering them to the highest bidder.——I really don't think that **JESSIE** has any real cause to complain in this direction.

My sympathies are really with the mothers. Mothers-in-law are, as a rule, treated with far less respect than is their due. In their capacity as guardians and chaperons of their daughters, they place themselves in most delicate and uncomfortable positions in order to bring about results which their daughters, single-handed, could never accomplish—at least, except those of so independent a nature as **JESSIE**.

R. S. V. P.—Probably you mean the river Tinto in Spain. The stream petrifies the sand in its bed, and stones that by chance touch one another are rapidly united into one piece. It is impossible for fish to live in this water.

N.—The word "lady" literally means "loaf giver."

GUARD wishes to know which is the longest straight piece of railway line in the United Kingdom.——That between Thirsk and Northallerton on the North-Eastern Railway. It is between five and six miles in length.

G. P.—Theoretically speaking we ought to drink from one-third to two-fifths as many ounces of water as we weigh in pounds. That is to say, if you weigh a hundred and sixty-eight pounds you ought to drink from three and a half to four pints daily.

L. H. EDWARDS (DUBLIN).—I am delighted to hear that your four-months-old baby-girl already appreciates *Pearson's Weekly*. One of its missions is to keep people quiet and out of mischief.

MABEL has been married only twelve months. She married after a three-years' engagement, and thought at the time that her husband really loved her, but she writes to me in a heart-broken way to say that since marriage his affection has cooled considerably, for "he does not only forget to kiss me before breakfast, but he never thinks of kissing me at night. I am afraid that we are going to be

even more unhappy, for Reggie says I'm silly, when I mention this to him."

——Really I do not think you have much ground to go on in your complaint. Surely, a moderately affectionate farewell after breakfast on his leaving the house, and another on his return, should be sufficient guarantee of his sincerity. For, after all, you must remember that mere demonstrative affection of this sort is no criterion of the depth of love. If your husband has neglected you no worse than this, you are, indeed, a happy woman.

GERTRUDE TROTTER writes to say that she does not consider the key of the Jumbled Story "half such pleasant reading as the correct story published in full."——The publication of the complete story was dropped because it occupied too much space, and was objected to by the readers who did not enter for the competitions. However, G. T. will have no occasion to complain in the future, for the Jumbled Stories will in future be supplanted by another form of competition, which, I feel convinced, will prove as popular.

New preparations for the preservation of boots and shoes are always pouring into the market, but the really good ones are scarce. A bottled mixture produced under the peculiarly appropriate name of "Moonshine," seems to be quite a good thing in its way. It appears that oil is the chief constituent in its manufacture, yet it is so chemically treated that when applied to leather it rapidly dries and leaves a polish. In fact it does for your foot-covers what *Short Stories* does for your intellect.

MR. HENRY MARLES, of 72, Cobden Road, Brighton, is a man who is capable of seizing an opportunity. The recent development of affairs in Africa has resulted in his producing a capital little penny puzzle, consisting of a sheet of metal cut out in the shape of Africa and scored over with a number of slots through which are thrust the legs of a little lead lion—legs which are larger at the bottom than at the top. It is symbolic of the British lion in Africa. The object is to get him out.

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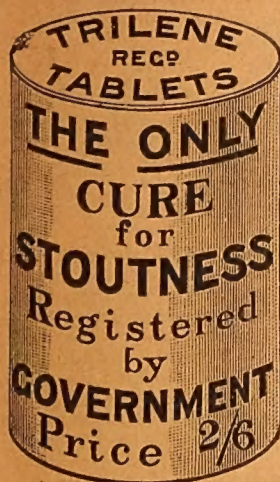
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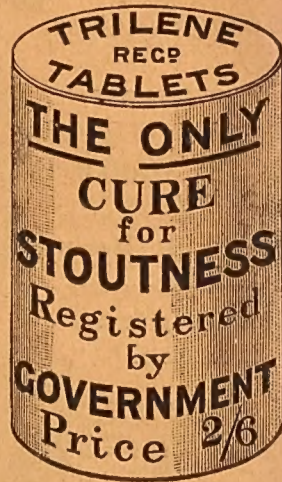
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Illustrated Family Novelist, November 30th, 1895, says: "A great many women who are plump by nature worry about their stoutness. However, there are some perfectly safe remedies for embonpoint, among them being the Trilene Tablets, which are not only safe, but absolutely beneficial to the general health, and speedily produce the desired effect."

MR. TAYLOR, Church Farm, St. James, Halesworth, says: "I have lost quite 2 stone since taking your Tablets."

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Convalescent Home, New Brighton, Cheshire.

MISS S. J. FRITCHARD says: "They have done me good. I am 21lb. lighter already."

"Bretton West, near Wakefield.

"MISS L. LANGFIELD has taken a box of Tablets, and is already 7lb. lighter."

MRS. HUTCHINSON, 46, Irwell Street, Widnes, Lancashire, writes: "I have taken three boxes and am reduced a stone."

A. D. BILLINGS, Bell Inn, Aldershot, writes: "Have derived great benefit already. Less in size and weight, and breathing greatly improved."

25, Windsor Terrace, Penarth, Cardiff.
MISS M. FLAVELL says: "I have lost 2 stone, and am much better in health."

Extract from Bury and Suffolk Times, June 15th, 1894: "Miss Atherton sings and dances as piquantly as ever, and is a marvel of agility, considering how much flesh she has put on of late. Her friends should induce her to take a course of Trilene Tablets, about which I hear wonderful things. One portly acquaintance of my own by merely a few weeks' use of these little Tablets, has reduced his bulk perceptibly. I am assured the Tablets are harmless and tasteless, and that the Trilene Company in Finsbury Pavement, London, are doing an enormous and ever-increasing trade."

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